THE

Home Rule Leagues

BY

M. SUBRAYA KAMATH

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PREFACE

The story of the HOME RULE LEAGUES, as unfolded here, is essentially a narrative of their rapid growth and marvellous achievements. The whole story is of so recent a date that several of the incidents will be fresh in the minds of most readers, but presented in a connected form, its study is bound to encourage the healthy tendencies in our public life. It is yet too early, perhaps, to give full publicity to some incidents in the early days of the League; but I am hopeful, I have unfolded none, the publication of which may be considered untimely. It may, however, be that the personal touches in some pictures are incorrect; if so, I shall be most happy to be convinced of them. All criticisms will be welcomed and used, if there should be a demand for a second edition.

M. SUBRAYA KAMATH

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The Home Rule Leagues

CHAPTER I

Introduction.

The growth of the Home Rule movement during the past two years has surpassed all expectations. The membership of the two leagues has run into several thousands. There is hardly an important town in the Indian Empire which does not boast of a Home Rule League to which are adhering, with a few exceptions, the most valuable of the public workers. When the idea of starting these leagues originally suggested itself, few Indians expected so remarkable a career. In fact, the bulk of the Anglo-Indians and officials thought that they could very well treat it with ridicule or indifference. All the same, the League was started at an opportune and psychological moment, certainly not a day too soon.

The first anniversary of the War found a large number of thoughtful Indians thinking what would be the position of the Motherland at its close. Statesmen in England and the Dominions were considering problems of Imperial reconstruction, and there was rarely any favourable reference to India. Turing to internal affairs, they could see

no change even in the official policy. The change in "the angle of vision" decerned by the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Roberts, did not make itself felt in Indian political life. The Congress itself was very weak, and the session in Madras, presided over by Babu Bhupendranath Basu, evoked little enthusiasm. The Muslim League, although in favour of Self-Government as an ultimate goal, was still standing aloof, and there was yet another group of political workers, the Nationalists, who left the Congress at Surat, who too kept away from it. The situation was thus very gloomy, and to remedy the same it suggested itself to some Indians and to their friends that an organisation uniting all schools of thought in India and working for the achievement of the national goal would prove opportune and helpful.

Viewed from this standpoint, the Home Rule Movement is a protest against the ways of both the Government and the existing political associations. Though remaining within the Congress, several of its leaders felt that it was not being utilised to the full, and a few of them were agreed that a body was required which could stir up political life and keep up political agitation throughout the year. The utility of the Congress no one denied. But it had become the affair of one week and the country needed an organisation which did much more. There was also the additional consideration that the Congress did not represent the whole Nation. If

India was to make herself heard, there was evident necessity to remove these differences and to create an organisation where all could work in co-operation with each other for the achievement of what was unanimously declared to be the goal of public work in the country.

The suggestion to form the League received perhaps even greater impetus from the attitude of the Government of India and of the Imperial Government towards Indian affairs. The happy impression created by India's enthusiastic entry into the war was slowly disappearing in England, and reactionary journals were now and then going back to their old policy of distrust of India. The movement for Imperial reconstruction indicated that, while India was the subordinate of England before the war, she might have to serve five nations at its close, namely England and the four Self-Governing colonies of Canada, Australia,South Africa and New Zealand, and that was not at all a pleasant prospect. The treatment meted out to the people of India by the Canadians, Australians, or the South Africans was still quite fresh in the minds of all, and no one desired that they should be our masters or even the chief advisers of our masters. Further, in India itself, events seemed to take a turn identical with what one found prior to the war. Instances began to increase where the Government of India invited controversial discussions by actions which were not at all popular. The impression which all these developments in

the country as well as outside created on the public mind was that, unless India attained a status equal to that of the Self-Governing Colonies, her position at the end of the war might be still worse than what it then was.

Further, the educated section of the people were thoroughly convinced that, under the present system of Government, progress was bound to be very slow. A sustained agitation carried on under the most favourable auspices by no less a leader than Mr. Gokhale was unable to influence the Government of India to embark on a policy of universal education. After 60 years of British rule, only a fifth of the school-going population was receiving instruction of any type. In the sphere of sanitation, the position was in no way happy. Malaria was exacting a very heavy toll of lives, and although, thanks to the genius of Dr. Ross, its causes were known, nothing had been done to eradicate that epidemic. Plague and Cholera were having their own way. Turning to the economic condition of the people, the view prevailing among all educated Indians was that the country was growing poorer, and whatever the increase in the average income of individuals owing to higher prices of food-stuffs, the struggle for existence was getting keener. The Agricultural Department was not receiving adequate attention nor was the Government prepared to undertake all possible measures for rapid industrial advancement. The Congress had been asking for all these reforms for

decades; but theirs was a voice in the wilderness. A feeling was coming over the country that the time had come for the people to see whether they cannot do what the Government, under the existing system of administration, failed to achieve.

In other words, it was everywhere felt that Home Rule was a greater necessity than it was at any time during British Rule in India.

CHAPTER II

The First Scheme

Though Nationalists all over the country were, for the previous ten years demanding Self-Government within the Empire, Mrs. Besant, who had, a few months ago, entered the political arena, was almost the first to perceive the need for the Home Rule League in India and she felt that, if it was to be successful, it must be a national organisation containing the various leaders of thought in all political parties and races; in other words, the League must be such that Nationalists as well as Moderates, Hindus as well as Musalmans and Parsis could work within its sphere for the achievement of the national goal. With that view, she left Madras on a tour to consult the various leaders of public opinion in the country and she received considerable encouragement from the G. O. M., Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, whom she saw personally at Versova. Not only did he favour her idea, but he even consented to be the President of the League with Sir. William Wedderburn as the Vice-President for work in England and Sir S. Subramania Iyer as Vice-President in India.

The public received the first intimation about this proposed organisation in an interview which

Mrs. Besant gave to a representative of the Associated Press of India at Bombay:

She gave the following outline of her scheme for India's immediate political work. She thinks that this is the time that when India should ask for Self-Government similar to what has been promised recently by Mr. Lloyd George to the colonies. India will ask for it as a matter of right and not as a reward for the help rendered during the war. That will not be proper. India has a right to ask for Self-Government. As regards the Proclamation of 1858 and various other promises made by England, India's claim should be independent of this, and though England might show respect to her promises, India has to ask an equally right place in the Empire and that now if she is left out, when the whole question will be considered, she will be out in|the end too. The Englishmen are a practical race and they will not give India the right unless she asks for it. India does ask for the right, but it is necessary to give expression to her wishes and now the country must be stirred in the matter, and in this the Congress should lead the country as it has the right to lead. But if the Congress does not, Mrs.Besant will take up the question herself. When she approached this subject, she meant to work it through. In order to have the subject taken up by the next Congress, she is consulting Indian leaders. After the Congress has formulated a scheme of Self-Government which she would like to call Home Rule for India, the English people being more familiar with the expression, the country will be stirred on behalf of it. Mrs. Besant will like to work out the scheme under the leadership of the National Congress.

The whole plan was finally placed before the public at the end of September in a letter which was published simultaneously in all the principle Indian journals, and ran as follows:

'After conversations in India and the correspondence with England which have been going on for many months, and the beginning of which goes back to discussions held last year with some English politicians and sympathisers with India in England, it has been decided to start a Home Rule League with "Home Rule for India," as its only object, as an auxiliary to the National Congress here and its British Committee in England. Its general aim will be to educate the people and to give to the demand of the Congress for Self-Government formulated in its article, the strength of a Nation which has realised itself and which, through its national organisation, has voiced its claim for years only to see it rejected.

The English democracy does not realise how things are really going in India; it does not realise that 255 millions of people are living under an autocracy and that for 30 years the National Congress has been patiently demanding representative Government, control over Indian taxation and Indian expenditure and effective voice in the management of Indian affairs. India has long been bearing the burden of Empire, supporting British wars outside her own borders, functionaries in England who are entirely unnecessary and mischievous, a huge pension list, the costliest of Civil Services, and many other burdens. She now claims her place of power in the Empire, for her statesmen are

becoming alarmed at the growing poverty of the masses, the decay of industries and the increasing burden of debt. There is no wish for separation from the Empire; the great majority of the educated classes eanestly desire to remain within it; but there is a steadily increasing determination to manage their own affairs, in a phrase, to win Home Rule.

It is proposed that the Home Rule League shall consist of two divisions, one in India and the other in England, the special function of the latter being to educate the English democracy in relation to India to take up the work which Charles Bradlaugh began, and which was prematurely struck out of his hands by death. The work of the British Committee, useful and self-sacrificing as it is, does not reach the British masses in whose hands the power lies.

Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji—who in his vigorous and clear-sighted old age is as determined that India shall have Swaraj (Self-Government) as when he coined that word in 1906 and who lately referred the Indian public to his 1906 speech at Calcutta as containing his views—has gladly consented to become President of the Home Rule League hoping that he will see Home Rule in India before he passes away. "A strong, steady, sustained agitation to be begun at once and continued till we win" was his pronouncement; "not harsh, nor provocative, but appealing to all that is best in the liberty-loving people in England."

Sir. S. Subramania Iyer, K.C.I.E.—who would have been elected President of the Congress this year had he been strong enough to preside over its long sittings and the yet harder work of the Subjects' Committee—is willing to be the President of the Indian

division of the League, and it is hoped that Sir William Wedderburn will accept the Presidency of the English divisions, as the inspiration for the League came very largely from himself. With these three splendid Congressmen at the head, all of whom are justly revered in India and in England and whom all that is best and most progressive in India will gladly hail as leaders, the future of the Home Rule League is secured.

The details of the organisation will be published in about a month, when the leading Congressmen, favourable to the idea in the Presidencies of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and the U. P., have shaped it.

It is hoped that the Congress at its next session will present a scheme of Self-Government based on the labours now going on in the Provincial and District Congress Committees, the Congress—as the nearest thing India has—a representative body, being the proper voice to formulate the demand. The work of the Home Rule League will then be to popularise it.

The Home Rule League will thus be separate from the Congress while in no way supplanting it; it will take up work which the Congress does not and cannot do, with its annual session and the rare meetings of its committees. It will have nothing to do with all the reforms for which the Congress stands save the one central claim—Self-Government : and it will work continuously and one-pointedly in the press and on the platfrom, for this one thing. Some may say : Why do this till after the war ? Because after the war, it will be too late. India should follow the example of the Self-Governing Dominions, and clearly state her resolve, as they have done, to share in the control of the Empire, as well as to enjoy Home Rule, as they already enjoy

it. Such a demand is no more out of place, no more embarrassing than theirs. To feel any embarrassment over it would imply a contemplation of refusal, and England has not invited India to fight for liberty in Europe with the intention of refusing liberty to liberty's soldiers and their people when they return home.

The response was most gratifying. No important journal took exception to the idea. Some trouble was created by a misinterpretation of the G. O. M's. views; but that was soon cleared by an explicit telegram from him, stating that he had consented to be the President of the League. After that, there was hardly any opposition. The *Bengalee* and the *Patrika* in Bengal, the *Leader* in U. P. were quite enthusiastic, and in Madras, the journals were even more emphatic. In Bombay the response was not quite hearty; but the younger leaders had declared in support of it. Needless to say, the Maharashtra and C. P. were solidly with Mrs. Besant in her suggestion.

CHAPTER III

The Reaction And its Sequel.

We shall trace the early success of the Home Rule Movement in Mrs. Besant's own words. On the 15th of October, she wrote that "the work of the Home Rule League is proceeding satisfactorily. Support is coming in from Hindus and Musalmans alike from Bengal as well as Bombay, from the north as well as from the south." She visited Calcutta and Nagpur lecturing on "India after the War" and "Theosophy and War." At Calcutta, the veteran leader, Babu Surendranath Bannerjee, and the previous year's Congress President, Babu Bhupendranath Basu, presided, while at Nagur Sir Bepin Bose took the chair at both lectures. In Calcutta, great enthusiasm prevailed and thousands heard the stirring addresses. A very strong committee was formed to work for the ideals of the Home Rule League. Anglo-Indian organs of officialdom wrote denouncing this noble work; but then they were not expected to do anything else. Mrs. Besant wrote personally the next week in the *Commonweal*:

After the visit to Nagpur, I returned to Madras via Bombay where I had the pleasure of again visiting Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and reported progress to him. It is rare to find the courage, enthusiasm of youth in one

whose body was so old, and amid the timidities and cautiousness and hesitation of younger men, it is refreshing to meet that fearless and steadfast spirit clear and unwavering. There, there is no lack of strength and self-reliance, the reliance also on India's strength and capacity. He does not insult the Motherland with coward doubts of her powers and of her fitness for self-rule. How often one remembers the words of Sri Krishna : "Neither in this world nor in any other is there happiness for the doubting self." We have too many Arjunas among us who need the stinging reproach : "Whence has this dejection befallen thee in this perilous strait, ignoble of heaven, unworthy, infamous, O Arjuna, yield not to impotence ; O Partha, it doth not befit thee. Shake off this paltry faint-heartedness, stand up, O conqueror of foes." Why is this "faint-heartedness" so common among Indians ; one feels that the explanation lies in that terrible "atmosphere of inferiority," in which Gopala Krishna Gokhale bitterly said that they are compelled to live. His own brave proud spirit ever chafed against it. But it never cowed nor weakened him. Many are so hypnotised by the constant assumption of Anglo-Indians that they are inferior that they come unconciously to believe it.

In these last sentences, we find a reference to the spirit that was coming over some of the leaders of Indian thought as days passed by. The reaction originated mainly from Bombay, led by Mr. Wacha himself. He first published a letter from Sir William Wedderburn, in which the latter declined to act as the Vice-President of the Home

Rule League until at any rate the Congress gave its support to the new scheme. It also became èvident by this time that the movement would create two definite parties in the Congress, parties, however, which did not aim or even think of splitting the Congress. Mrs. Besant wrote on the 5th of November:

"Two parties are now clearly defined by Mr. Wacha's publication of Sir William Wedderburn's letter, that of asking for gradual reform as the Congress has been doing for 30 years and that of boldly putting forward the goal declared to be the aim of the Congress in article I formulated for the first time in 1908, but clearly enunciated in 1906 by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji in his presidential speech in Calcutta under pressure of Lord Curzon's coercive policy and rendered necessary thereby ; I call the first policy of the Congress the right and necessary one for its early efforts, policy of Yesterday and the urging of the claim of Self-Government declared in 1908 the policy of To-morrow. The Yesterdays and To-morrows of India are the two parties in Indian politics like the Tories and Liberals in England. The Congress of 1915 will decide between them for the moment and will either put forward the scheme for Self-Government or move along the Yesterday's line of slow, very slow gradual reforms. In this there will be no split but a distinct step forward in organisation. If the Yesterdays succeed, the whole Congress will support the demand for slow and piece-meal reform, and the To-morrows will also work outside for the essential principle of Self-Government as laid down by the Congress until they have a majority in the

Congress. I had thought of avoiding this plain issue in deference to the Bombay view, but I am very grateful to Mr. Wacha for defining it by his letter to the "Bombay Chronicle," for the delegates to the Congress can now reeeive their mandate from their constituencies in the good open way. Instead of the fear of creating split, we shall have in the Congress a fair division on the two policies--the old human difference of temperament—the Yesterdays and To-morrows asserting themselves as parties." It is a great step forward in Indian political life, and we may all rejoice in it as showing a virility and strength which will restore the great Council of India to its place as a leader of united India."

By this time, the decision had also been reached that the idea of forming the Home Rule League shall be settled by an All-India Conference to which were invited all the leading men in the various provinces. December 25th was fixed for that discussion, so that the decision reached at it might be placed before the Congress itself. We publish below the full text of the invitation issued to attend this Conference, and the names of the orginal signatories are given at some length to indicate who were all in support of discussing Mrs. Besant's proposal at that moment. A large number of names were added after the first statement was issued, so that when the Conference day arrived, there were few Indians of note who did not affix their names to it.

INVITATION TO CONFERENCE.

ON THE FORMATION OF

A LEAGUE FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT.

To be holden at China Bagh, Girgaum, Bombay, on December, 25th, 1915 at 4-30 P.M.

We, the undersigned, have the honour to invite you, as a member of the $\frac{\text{All-India Congress Committee}}{\text{All-India Muslim League Council}}$ to be present at a Conference to decide on the establishment of a League for the education of the people of India and Great Britain on the necessity of Self-Government for India for the good of both nations and for the safety of the Empire, and of such Self-Government, forming a part of the reconstruction of the Empire after the war. The Conference will, if it approves the idea, choose the name of the League, formulate its basis, draw up its rules, and elect its all-India officers.

We have the honour to remain,
Sincerely Yours,

BOMBAY.

Dadabhai Naoroji, Ex-President, Congress.
Jehangir Bomanji Petit, Bombay Presidency Association.
Narottam Morarji Gokuldas, Bombay Presidency Association; Secretary, Reception Committee.
M. A. Jinnah, Bombay Presidency Association.
Balchandra Krishna (Sir), Bombay Presidency Association.
D. N. Bahardurji, Member, Reception Committee.
J. N. Bahadurji.
M. R. Jayakar.
Bhulabhai J. Desai.
Chunilal V. Mehta.
T. N. Malvi, Ex-Chairman, Reception Committee, Surat.
P. K. Telang, Member, Reception Committee.

Jamnadas Dwarkadas.
Ratansi D. Morarji.

BENGAL.

Sir Rash Behari Ghose, Kt., Ex-President, Congress.
Hon. Mr. Surendranath Bannerji, ,, ,, and Member, Supreme and Provincial Councils.
Bhupendranath Basu, Ex-President, Congress.
Principal Hirambachandra Mitra.
Satyananda Bose, Secretary, Provincial Congress Committee.
A. Rasul, Ex-President, Bengal Provincial Conference.
J. Chaudhuri, Ex-Member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Jogendranath Mukherjee, Ex-Member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Hon. Dr. Nilratan Sircar, Member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Krishna Kumar Mitra, Editor, "Sanjibani."
Prithwis Chandra Ray, Editor, "Indian World."
Baikuntanath Sen, Rai Bahadur, (Berhampore)—Ex-Member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Kisori Mohan Chowdhury, (Rajshabai.)
Ambika Charan Mozumdar (Faridpore), Ex-member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Motilal Ghose, Editor, "Amrita Bazar Patrika," Ex-President, Bengal Provincial Conference.
Rai Yatindranath Chowdhury—Ex-President, Bengal Provincial Conference.
Hon. Mr. B. Chakravarti, Member, Bengal Legislative Council.
Mujibar Rahman, Editor, "Musalman."
Mohamed Akrum Khan, Editor, "Mohammadi."
Satischandra Chatterjee.
Lalit Mohan Das.
Basanta Coomar Bose.
Surendranath Mallik.
Provas Chandra Mitter.
Debendar Chunder Ghose, Rai Bahadur.
Dr. Nares Chandra Sen Gupta.

Hirendranath Datta.
B. K. Lahiri.
S. N. Haldar.
Prosanto K. Sen.
P. Bannerji.
J. B. Sen.
G. N. Ray.
A. U. Chaudhuri.
S. K. Sen.
K. B. Dutt.

MADRAS.

Sir S. Subramania Iyer, K. C. I. E.
G. Subramania Iyer, Late Editor, The "Hindu" and "Swadeshamitran."
Hon. Mr. B. N. Sarma, Member, Madras Legislative Council.
,, P. Kesava Pillai, ,,
,, V. K. Ramanujachariar. ,,
,, M. Ramachandra Rao. ,,
,, B. V. Narasimha Iyer. ,,
,, V. S. Narasimha Raj. ,,
Yakub Hasan, Secretary, Madras Muslim League.
M. A. Kuddus Badsha Sahab, Khan Bahadur, Vice-President, Muslim League.
Ghulam Mahmud Mahajir, Khan Bahadur.
T. Rangachariar.
C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.
B. P. Wadia.
Annie Besant, Editor of "New India" and the "Commonweal."
G. Subbiah Chetty, Rao Sahab.
T. V. Muthukrishna Iyer, Secretary, Congress Committee.
Viraragavachariar.

UNITED PROVINCES.

Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (Allahabad), Member, Supreme and U. P. Legislative Councils.
Hon. Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, (Allahabad), Member, Provincial Councll.
C. Y. Chintamani, (Allahabad) Editor of the "Leader."

Iswar Saran, (Allahabad).
Pandit Krishna Kant Malaviya, (Allahabad) Editor of the "Abhyudaya."
Brajnarain Gurtu, (Allahabad).
Dr. R. Ranjit Sing, (Allahabad).
Mool Chand Tandan, (Allahabad).
Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, (Allahabad).
Principal B. Sanjiva Rao, (Allahabad).
Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru, (Allahabad).
Krishnaram Mehta, (Allahabad).
Satya Nand Joshi, (Allahabad).
Sayad Fazal Rahman, (Cawnpore).
Murari Lal, (Cawnpore).
Bhishma Nath Tholal, (Cawnpore).
Vikramajit Singh, (Cawnpore).
Jai Narayan Prasad Bajpai, (Cawnpore).
Devi Prasad Shukla, (Cawnpore).
N. G. Paranjpe, (Cawnpore).
Gokaranath Misra, (Lncknow).
Syed Nabi-Ullah, (Lucknow) Ex-President, Session Muslim League, Vice-President, M. L.
Mirza Sami Ullah Beg, (Lucknow), Member, Council, Muslim League.
S. P. Sanyal, (Lucknow), Editor, "Lucknow Advocate."
A. P. Sen, (Lucknow).
Rama Chandra, (Lucknow),
B. N. Chakbast, (Lucknow).
Iqbal Narain Mesaldan, (Lucknow).
Iqbal Narain Gurtu, (Benares).
Govind Dasa, (Benares).

BEHAR.

Hon. Mr. Muzaral Haque, President-Elect of Muslim League Congress, Member, Behar Legislative Council.
Hon. Mr. Sarafraz Hussain Khan, President-Elect of Muslim League Congress, Member, Behar Legislative Council.
Hon. Mr. S. Wasi Ahmed, President-Elect of Muslim League Congress, Member, Behar Legislative Council.
S. Sinha, Editor, "Hindustan Review."

Syed Muhamed.
Syed Abdul Ali, Member, Council Muslim League.
Kuar Nandan Sahay.
Chandrabansi Sahay.
Nand Kishore Lall.
Krishna Sahay.
Parameshwar Lall.
F. Ali Noruddin.

BERAR AND HYDERABAD (Deccan).

Hon. Mr. M. V. Joshi, (Amraoti), Member. C. P. Legislative Council.
Sarojini Naidu (Hyderabad).

CENTRAL PROVINCES.

Dr. H. S. Gour.
Hon. Mr. J. W. Kelkar, (Holaghat), Member, C. P. Legislative Council.
V. N. Jakatdar, (Bhandara).
C. M. Thacker, Rai Sahib (Raipur).
N. A. Dravid, Servants of India Society.
[There were fourteen signatories from Upper Burma.]

Mr. Syed Wazir Hasan, Secretary, All-India Muslim League, is an enthusiastic supporter of the League, but he is so rushed with work that he has not sent his signature. I feel that I cannot add any name without having received the written authority of its owner. A few signatures are on their way, but have not arrived, and I cannot wait longer. These will be published when received. Outside these and the signatories of the invitation, no one will be admitted to the Conference except all members of the All-India Congress Committee and the All-India Muslim League Council. It is a Conference of representatives, not a public gathering. A card of admission is enclosed herewith.

ANNIE BESANT.

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

I may be permitted a word of personal explanation. When I first thought of organising a political League, I thought it would be a kind of light cavalry regiment, enrolled by myself, to serve the Congress, but with an independent organisation. My Madras friends advised me against this, and I yielded to their opinion, and asked an influential Congressman in each Circle to invite representative Hindus and Musalmans to meet me and discuss the plan. The idea "caught on," and the leaders of the two great representative Indian bodies looked on the idea with favour. The result is above. I feel that these men, in their generous response to whom India has entrusted her political destiny for 30 years, have the right to say what in their judgment is best for their own country, and that I—unfortunately for myself a foreigner—ought to accept their judgment as to the position, form and relations of the League, if they approve of it. I am grateful if they will accept my services as they accepted those of A. O. Hume and others, who have brought knowledge of British ways and political methods to India's strengthening. If they decide against the League, I shall not persist in organising it, but shall merely go on working for Home Rule for India as an individual at my own risk, with voice and pen, giving any services to the Congress that the Congress may choose to accept, or to assign to me.

I offer my grateful thanks to all those above-named, who have rendered the full discussion of the Home Rule League possible, and await cheerfully the decision of the representative bodies of the two great Communities on the subject.

Madras, Dec. 16, 1915. ANNIE BESANT.

CHAPTER IV

The Conference at China Baug.

The eventful Conference met on the appointed date though late in the evening by reason of the reception of the President-Elect of the Congress who arrived much later then was anticipated. About 200 persons were present, leaders of public opinion from all parts of the country. It was at first feared that persons strongly opposed to the idea of forming the League, mainly the older leaders of Bombay, would not be present on the occasion. But one by one, all of them came in. The big hall in China Baug was completely filled up. Babu Surendranath Bannerji was voted to the Chair. Mrs. Besant opened the proceedings with a short speech in which she left the entire decision to the assembled representatives of the people. The moment the subject wasthrown open to discussion, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar got up and asked, to the surprise of every one, whether they had any right to consider the question of forming the League. He asked them to consider in what capacity they had assembled. True, some of them were members of the All-India Congress Committee and some of the Moslem League. But they had no

mandate from either of these bodies to be present at that Conference or to take part in these proceedings. As such, their decision would not be binding on any one, least of all on the two national institutions, the Congress and the League. He requested that, before they considered the question as to the formation of the League, some light may be thrown on their powers to decide the issue, at any rate as to the position which they occupied at the moment. The raising of this irrelevant question had the desired effect of creating a barren discussion on points not at all connected with the purpose of the Conference. Some proceeded to support the Congress and others to decry it, pointing out that it was the *thamasha* of a week, and an executive body was required to work out any programme of work of the Congress itself. Several important leaders, including ex-Presidents of the Congress, took part in the discussion, and some of them promised to see that, during the coming year, the Congress Committees undertook to do all that the Home Rule League was expected to do in the event of it being started. Finally, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was till then expected to have been in favour of forming the League, rose to move the postponement of the debate. He said that the next day the Subjects' Committee would be meeting where they would have an opportunity of discussing the idea of the Congress leaders on the subject of maintaining the constitutional agitation throughout the year, and he urged that the question

of forming the League might well be deferred until the Congress leaders decided on that point. With that speech, the Conference adjourned to meet two days later, when the final decision would be taken.

Mrs. Besant's own impression of this first meeting was thus conveyed to the readers of *New India* in a letter written the very next day :

December 27th.—Last evening about 250 Indians gathered, of whom ten to fifteen were definitely hostile, and another five wavering. The rest, Hindus and Muslims, many of whom had come from the north, wished to form the Home Rule League at once, and grew very weary of useless technicalities, raised by the hostile minority in order to talk out the League. We foiled them by patience in listening, so that they cannot hereafter say they were silenced, but were immovable in the determination to adjourn to the 29th. Efforts were made for January 1st—when everyone would be gone; for the 31st when many would be gone ; for the 30th I am afraid I was very obstinate in insisting on the 29th, but obstinacy is necessary when deliberate tactics were adopted by a minority to circumvent a majority. We shall know by the 29th what the Congress has done, and on that evening, so far as prophesy is permissible, we shall form the League. The Musalmans are splendidly firm and we have plenty of Hindus ready to join hands to make the united organisation. This is the vital point for India's future—a working body, containing both, labouring for the Motherland.

The adjournment proved disastrous to the cause of the League. The nature of the discussion at the first meeting and some of the remarks of the older leaders created a very unfortunate feeling among the younger leaders, and specially on the Mussalmans who had gathered strong. Sevaral of them had come in the hope that they were after all going to have an organisation in which they could work hand in hand with the Hindu leaders. Some of them had very serious misgivings as to whether the older leaders would consent to the formation of the League, and when at the outset Sir Narayan Chandavarkar suggested the initial difficulty, they openly expressed to their friends that the Conference would end in a fiasco. Except the Hon. Mr. Rasul, none of them spoke at the gathering, and when they left it, they told the organisers that few of them were likely to be present at the postponed meeting, because it was clear that it would not be successful.

The Subjects' Committee of the Congress responded to the demands of the Home Rule Leaguers and passed, after a prolonged discussion, the following resolution urging continuous political propaganda:

"That this Congress is of opinion that the time has arrived to introduce further and substantial measures of reform towards the attainment of Self-Government, as defined in Article 1 of its Constitution,

namely reforming and liberalising the system of Government in this country so as to secure to the people an effective control over it, by amongst other.

(a) The introduction of Provincial autonomy including financial independence.

(b) The expansion and reform of the Legislative Council so as to make them truly and adequately representative of all sections of the people and to give them an effective control over the acts of the Executive Government.

(c) The reconstruction of the various existing Executive Councils and the establishment of similar Executive Councils in Provinces where they do not exist.

(d) The reform or the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State for India.

(e) The establishment of Legistative Councils in province where they do not now exist.

(f) The readjustment of relations between the Secretary of State for India and the Government of India and

(g) A liberal measure of Local Self-Government.

That this Congress authorises the All-India Congress Committee to frame a scheme of reform and a programme of continuous work, educative and propagandist, having regard to the principles embodied in this resolution, and further authorises the said Committee to confer with the Committee, that may be appointed by the All-India Muslim League for the same purpose, and to take such further measures as may be necessary—the said Committee to submit

its report on or before the 1st of September 1916 to the General Secretaries who shall circulate it to the different Provincial Congress Committees as early as possible.

This resolution proved fatal to the idea of forming the League. Several eaders who were at first in favour of it thought that, since the Congress has undertaken to do what the League was to have attempted, it was best to give the Congress organisations a chance before deciding as to the formation of the League. Those who were from the first hostile to the League began to give wide currency to the fear that the League was intended to supplant the Congress. By this and several other manœuvres, a sudden change of opinion was brought about in the minds of many of the delegates of the Home Rule Conference, so that when they met the second time, it was found that, if Mrs. Besant persisted in her idea, she would be opposed by the entire group of the older leaders.

The proceedings of the adjourned meeting were thus summarised by the Associated Press:

The adjourned meeting of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League Conference was held this evening, Babu Surendranath Bannerji, presiding. Mrs. Besant at the outset made a statement in which she said that she would be guided by elderly members of the Congress Committee and the Moslem League.

Mr. Mazharul Haque said that he and his Mussalman friends were entirely in favour of forming the Home Rule League.

Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer brought an amendment that the consideration of the League formation be postponed till the Congress and the Muslim League make their report.

Many opposed him, prominently Mr. Jehangir Petit, Dr. Gour and Mr. Rasul. Many Mussalmans also were against it. There was a most heated and excited discussion. Mrs. Besant eventually accepted the amendment which, being put to vote, was carried, nearly thirty representatives of the Hindu and Mussalman public opinion voting against it.

Thus ended the first effort to start the Indian Home Rule League.

Various interpretations have been put on this failure. The bulk of the delegates, who were for forming the League at the outset, were satisfied that they had been successful in infusing new life into the Congress. Mrs. Besant herself expressed that view in the issue of the *Commonweal* of January 14. She wrote:

When the Bombay Yesterdays took the wind out of the Home Rule League sail by adopting our programme, they secured, as they fondly thought, two advantages. They dexterously deprived us of the help we expected by making the League unnecessary, knowing that they could still put off under various pretexts of delay any effective education and propaganda, and having created out of their ignorance an impulsive and headlong Mrs. Besant, they thought that she would forthwith tumble into a pit they had digged for

her and insist on the League, the whole League, and nothing but the League and so stand discredited before the country with a small following of little-known persons. My eager young men also expected me to perform hari-kari for the amusement of the Yesterdays and were angry at my acceptance of the eminently sensible amendment. They did not realise that it left us in a position to carry on our propaganda within the Congress organisation from a position of great advantage, and at the same time only suspended the League activity until we had either forced the Yesterdays to go forward with us or else prove to the country that their agitation and propaganda were a pretext in reality. I should have forgotten all my political training had I fallen into the trap set for me. To be headlong at least in appearance in speech is often desirable. But to be contentious and shrewd in action is also the duty of a political leader. To charge ahead without any regard to change the conditions is not always wisdom."

Later events have shown that Mrs. Besant's procedure was the wisest possible. For when, at last, the Home Rule League was definitely started, opinion in the country was generally favourable to it. Most of the people were convinced by that time that the Congress resolution in favour of continuous propaganda was more or less a dead letter—thus justifying the formation of another association to maintain the same.

CHAPTER V

The Founding of the League.

The early days of 1916 witnessed a perceptible increase in political propaganda all over the country, notably in Madras and the United Provinces. The Congress Committees were more active. They arranged a series of lectures and issued a few pamphlets explaining the aims of the Congress. But in a few weeks, this temporary activity quieted down,and the All-India Congress Committee, which was asked to submit a definite scheme of reforms on or before the 1st September, postponed its deliberations to a later date. Meanwhile, the bureaucracy was waking up to the intensity of the Home Rule propaganda conducted by only a few individuals, notably Mrs. Besant and Lok. Tilak. She had issued a number of pamphlets, and, after Mr. Arundale's arrival at Madras, the task of organisation was taken up in right earnest. The first response of the Government was the demand of security from *New India* which created a sudden storm of indignation all over the country. A few weeks later came the order of the Bombay Government asking Mrs. Besant not to enter within the limits of the Presidency,and, in August, the Government of Madras forfeited the security of *New India*. These official activities naturally influenced the

public to strengthen the constitutional agitation, and the first momentous decision in that respect was taken up on September 4th at a meeting in the Gokhale Hall when the Home Rule League was definitely established. The following extracts from the introductory speech of Mr. Arundale will indicate the feelings of many political workers at that moment in organising the League:

Mrs. Besant asks me, as officiating Organising Secretary, to report on the progress of the League since the question arose of terminating the suspension agreed on in Bombay.

You are all aware that, at first, our League was only brought into existence for the purpose of giving some definite direction to the Xth resolution of the National Congress held in 1914 in Madras.

In the hope, however, that the 1916 Congress Committees would take up the question definitely and energetically as a consequence of the passing by Congress of Resolution XIX, the League was temporarily suspended when about to be organised. To explain the succeeding inaction, there are some who aver that this resolution does not explicitly mean Home Rule, there are even some who will tell you that the idea of Home Rule is entirely foreign to the Resolution. But the Resolution itself declares that the system of Government must be reformed so as to secure to the people an effective control over the Government, and then proceeds to detail some of the ways in which such reform is to be brought about. Not only this, but the All-India Congress Committee is to embark on a scheme

of educative propaganda and reform, submitting a definite report "on or before September 1st."

But since it soon became clear that little or nothing would in fact be done, a few eager workers determined that the Congress of 1916 should be committed far more definitely to Home Rule than its immediate predecessor. A Home Rule propaganda was accordingly set on foot, and, on my return home, I was asked by Mrs. Besant to make a short tour with the object of ascertaining the feeling in northern India, to draw recruits round the Home Rule Flag, to help to organise educative propaganda, and above all to send to the coming Congress, delegates pledged to make the policy of Home Rule the dominant policy of the National Congress. India cannot wait, however much committees may, and it was necessary to begin early to ensure fruitful results by December next.

But nothing formal could be done until September 1st. Already, indeed, a mass of educative literature has been published broadcast by the All-India Self-Government Propaganda Fund, the New India Political Pamphlets and other cheap literature. Then there were the transactions of the Madras Parliament, culminating in the most important contribution to constructive political literature we have ever had—the Self-Government for India Bill, still under the conside-ration of the House. And we have had, and I hope, shall continue to have, that indispensable voice of the peoples' aspirations—"New India." All these constituted the food. We needed the men, the workers, and these we could not get until we had seen whether the various Congress Committees were going to carry out

the orders of the Congress in the spirit and in the letter. We are now into September, the Congress Scheme for Self-Government is not yet ready, while no scheme for educative propaganda has been formulated, despite the mandate of the Congress. The Home Rule League, therefore, comes formally into existence as the vehicle for the expression of Resolution X of 1915 and Resolution XIX of 1916. The League will do its best to serve the National Congress along the lines laid down in its Resolutions, and in accordance with the principle underlying the existence of the Congress—the securing to the Indian people of their political freedom.

I am not altogether certain whether our League would have come into existence even now—at this late hour—had not Mrs. Besant received many urgent requests to re-establish or resuscitate the body whose final formation was suspended last year in order to make room for official Congress activity. Many of those who then wished to form definitely the Home Rule League watched with anxiety the months pass without any attempt being made to fulfill the Congress mandate. They realised that now is the psychological moment for work to be done, and they wanted it done under Mrs. Besant's leadership, if the official Congress Committee remained indifferent. I myself was the interpreter of the views of large numbers of people in the United Provinces. Accordingly, the Home Rule League now exists, you are to elect its office-bearers this afternoon, and you are to consider a draft constitution. Branches have already been formed in Bombay, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, Madanapalle, Kumbakonam, Adyar, Madura, Ahmednagar and Calicut—all

within a few days of Mrs. Besant's announcement that she would set the organisation in motion. We may, therefore, expect a large membership, and branches in every town, perhaps even in many villages. At present, our membership is within 500. It will soon become many thousands. But remember that these new members, though, perhaps, relatively few in number mean business, are workers and not merely sympathisers unwilling or unable to carry on active propaganda. And as for funds, our Acting Treasurer will not only tell you of the large sums already expended in literary propaganda, but will show you that money is coming in rapidly for future work. We need large funds, for India is a big country. But I feel sure that we shall not appeal in vain to the patriotism of at least educated India.

Delegates had come from far-off places to attend this meeting and members had been enrolled for the Home Rule League at various centres. It was decided that the office bearers of the League shall be chosen on the 15th September as a result of the elections by the branches founded till that date. The aims and objects of the Home Rule League were initially decided as follows :

1. To secure Self-Government for India through law-abiding and constitutional activities, the constitutional way being the best way of political evolution.

2. To maintain connection with Great Britain by becoming a free nation within the British Empire under the Imperial Crown of His Majesty the King-Emperor George V and his successors.

3. To support and strengthen the National Congress, which has laboured for 30 years to lay the foundation of Indian Self-Government.

4. To carry on continuous educative propaganda on the necessity of Home Rule for India.

Dr. Sir S. Subramania Iyer's name was suggested for the Hon. Presidentship and Mrs. Besant's name for the Presidentship. It was resolved to apply to the Congress Committee to recongnise the Home Rule League as one of its affiliated bodies, and a resolution was passed authorising the new League to co-operate with the sister organisation started in Maharashtra a few months earlier. The proceedings were closed with a stirring address by Mrs. Besant from which the following extracts will be read with interest:

Let me congratulate you on the successful meeting which we have held here as the first meeting of the League in Madras. It is a good augury that this League, so young in days, should have grown so rapidly as it has done, and that we are able to gather here together so large a number of men and women, who are already pledged as members of our League. The one thing that is necessary for the happiness and prosperity of India, the one thing that is necessary for the stability of the Empire, is that India should assume her place among the Self-Governing Dominions, should become a Free Nation among the Free Nations that will constitute the Federated Empire, and thus should add her spirituality, her

intellectual power, her deep and strong emotions, and the strength of the millions of her people to that great Aryan Empire the founding of which depends on India's co-operation with Britain. To the Empire as well as to India, I believe that Home Rule brings the highest good. It is necessary that to the practical science and knowledge of the West, there should be added that deeper and more enduring energy that springs out of the spiritual knowledge of India, and out of that immemorial past which stretches behind us into a time, of which history has no knowledge.

That India and England should join hand in hand is a guarantee for the peace of the world, now desolated by a terrible and disastrous War. The countries, worn out by the struggles they have gone through in the West, need the influence of the East upon them in order to make them realise that death is not the end of the human spirit, that the human spirit rises immortal from the ghastly battle-fields of the world, not only into a period of rest in higher worlds but also to come back again to the world it has left so early, in order to do new service with added power, with added strength of sacrifice; for, from the view of the East, death is as much a portal of birth as birth is a portal of death. "Certain is birth to the dead," as well as "certain is death to the born," and that great knowledge that India gives back to the western world justifies the ideas of Greek and Roman philosophy, which had been thought to be superstitious dreams by western scholars, but are really the profoundest of truths regarding man; it comes as a message of hope to Europe stricken by the terrible sword of War, Europe which is sacrificing the very cream of its population, who, instead of being

the fathers of the Nation, are the sacrifices from which a greater Nation shall be re-born.

This Home Rule League of ours, starting under such high hopes, has before it a magnificent future whose widespread usefulness none now can tell in this day of small beginnings; and for India herself, Home Rule is a necessary preliminary for every other reform on which her happiness and her prosperity depend. As was said the other day by a leader in Bombay, there cannot be in India any safe and sure progress for trade and commerce unless India has control over her own finance. There can be no National education in which love for the Motherland, patriotism, devotion to the country, shall join hand in hand with loyalty to the Crown Imperial until we have Home Rule, and the fathers and the mothers of India regulate the education of their own sons and daughters. There can be no peace in India, until the self-consciousness of the Nation overrides all the barriers of caste, of creed, of ancient racial divisions, and nothing but Home Rule can override those barriers. I say it on the warranty of history, as well as on a reasonable argument of facts. England was torn by racial divisions and was rent by religious animosities until a large measure tending towards popular Government was passed, until all disabilities and all privileges for rival religions were swept away, and until men recognised themselves as Englishmen, and not as Roman Catholics and Protestants, bitterly opposed to one another because of the penal laws. Home Rule is a solvent in which all differences are dissolved, and in which a Nation knows itself as one. It is not the form of Government that makes Home Rule; it is the

fact that a Nation is governing itself. A Nation which by its free vote voted an autocracy, will still be a Self-Governing Nation, if it is choosing it, just as Napoleon III. was chosen by vote in France. France did not lose Home Rule because she chose to elect Napoleon the little as her ruler; but there must be the assent of the people, and the people who decide must be natives of the country. I do not mean that none others need vote. I do not mean that Englishmen living in India for a certain number of years have not the same right to share in the Government, if they are British citizens, as those born in the land. It would be no hindrance if Indians elected one or two Englishmen to Parliament, when the Parliament is wholly elective or if one or two Indians were similarly elected to the English Parliament.

Home Rule being then necessary for National prosperity, for National education, and for equality among religions in the country, let us next consider the work before us.

It is to educate the people politically, and to make them understand why we want Home Rule, what the grievances are that Home Rule only can remedy, and why we are working for this change. Hence our members must study. It is no use going to platforms and talking a number of platitudes and truisms. You must back them up by facts and figures. Personally, I think the reason that the Bombay Government excluded me was not because I was making general fireworks about Home Rule, but because I gave them a mass of facts and a mass of figures, because I laid stress on the poverty of the country and proved it, because I laid stress on the grievances.

of the country and proved them, and because I pointed out that India was going down in her prosperity and up in her death rate. It was those dry, hard, unanswerable figures which made the Governor in Council decide that my presence was prejudicial there to public safety. Remember that that was Mr. Gokhale's strong point. In the Imperial Council, his facts were clear, his statistics were impregnable, and for the first time, bureaucrats found themselves met on an equal platform by a man who knew the conditions of the country even more accurately than they; and so when they put forward a sophistry and said that the standard of comfort was rising, he showed that the reverse was the truth.

I read for some six months the various books that I colud get hold of before I wrote that sixpenny book, "India—a Nation." There is a mass of figures there that cannot be answered—no one has yet tried to answer them. They have said that my history is bad, and when I wrote to prove that it was good, the "Times of India" said that it could not print my letter as it did not apply to 1916, though the challenged history was of the 18th and 19th centuries. You must learn; otherwise there is no good in your becoming lecturers. I take care that my facts are always firm before I begin to talk about them. We want men to lecture, but they must be educated men, who know the subjects on which they are going to speak, and that is why Miss. Arundale said that there were classes in England studying Indian books before the English Home Rule League was founded. Begin then to work, and let us see if we cannot have definite study classes for Indian questions. We want a lot of vernacular

work to be done, and pamphelts to be translated by men who know both languages well. Then we want Home Rule missionaries all the time, of the type of Mr. Arundale, who will think of Home Rule, plan for it, and work for it. If your strength and energy be put into it, we are sure to succeed; but do not think you are going to succeed without difficulty, without self-sacrifice. Those who will do the work of the League are those who will get nothing, but will sacrifice liberty and property to serve the Motherland. If we can get in every Province fifty men like that, Home Rule is sure. Come into the League then, as you would come into some great army, resolute to do your best, to work with all your heart and mind. Do not care if one or two leaders fall in the struggle: their fall is the promise of future victory.

Do you remember how before the battle of Kurukshetra opened, Arjuna, one of the five great brothers, needed weapons wherewith to fight the foe; no weapons of earth were good enough, no weapons forged of earth's material availed for that mighty struggle. Arjuna went away into the mountain and performed Tapas until before him Mahadeva appeared and asked him what boon he needed; and He gave him those celestial weapons with which alone earth's battle could be won. It is by Tapas that strength is gained; it is by Tapas that Heaven's blessings are won upon the struggles of earth. You and I, my brothers of the League, offer to God all that we have, and keep nothing back. We give our money, we give our liberty, we give our lives if need be, for the sake of the Mother. God is just, God is righteous. The sacrifice that we place upon the Motherland's altar shall send up

its flame to Heaven and the answering fire shall descend. (Loud cheers).

By the 15th September, 31 branches had been established in the country whose decisions were thus summarised by *New India* in its issue of that date:

They have elected Mrs. Besant as President by 30 votes to one, one branch electing Mr. Tilak. The voting has been unanimous for Sir S. Subramania Aiyer K.C.I.E., LLd., as Honorary President, for C. P. Ramasamy Iyer, P. K. Telang and A Rasul—the Hon. Mr. Rasul—as General Secretaries residing severally in the three Presidency towns; Mr. B. P. Wadia as Treasurer and Mr. G. S. Arundale as Hon. Secretary. The Provincial Secretaries who form the remaining members of the Council, are not yet elected, but we hope that the number of branches will multiply quickly, so that the elections may not be long delayed.

Madras Presidency has already 20 branches :Adyar, Calicut, Conjeevaram, Erode, Guntur, Kumbakonam, Madanapalle, Madras, Masulipatam, Madura, Narasapur, Negapatam, Ongole, Palghat, Salem, Tanjore, Tenali, Tirupur, Trichinopoly, Venkataramputtur, Bombay and Sindh 5; Ahmednagar, Bombay, Hyderabad, Karachi, Poona, United Provinces 4; Allahabad, Benares, Cawnpore, Lucknow; Bengal and Central Provinces, one each. Some of the branches are inconveniently large, and it would probably be better to divide them or to make them into separate working committees. It is remarkable that, while Madras comes out so strongly in branches, the League has, so far, not attracted the older leaders, while in the United Provinces and

Calcutta some of the leaders are leading. The holding back for a time here is probably due to the anxiety for the Congress that was so marked a feature last year, for many of our leading Congressmen are thoroughly devoted to Home Rule. When they see that the League is a strength to the Congress, not a rival, they are sure to come into it. Meanwhile, each branch must work hard to justify its existence. We have begun well, but we are only at the beginning.

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Arundale at 10, Esplanade.

The rapid expansion of the Home Rule League during its early days was due primarily to the exertions of the Organising Secretary, Mr. G. S. Arundale. He had come to India a few months earlier to assist Mrs. Besant in that cause. Within a few weeks, he became very popular in almost every centre of public opinion in India which he visited. Everywhere he spoke on the necessity for Home Rule and the necessity for organisation to further the national cause, and his influence was felt all the more when he was elected unanimously as the Organising Secretary by the founding branches of the League.

His was the idea to start a book-shop dealing with the Home Rule literature at 10, Esplanade, where were located the offices of the Organising Secretary also. Mr. Arundale spent the major part of the day there, and it is no exaggeration to say that every visitor to the shop returned with a greater enthusiasm to work for the Motherland. To those outside Madras, his influence was felt through his notes in *New India* appearing in the last column of the Home Rule Page, some of which notes were later on published as pamphlets in the Home Rule series. No day passed away without Mr. Arundale putting forward some new

suggestions to further Home Rule work and this daily incentive roused the people to enthusiasm in every place entered by *New India*. Home Rule Leagues were formed in regular succession even in smaller villages, and the membership went on growing. For various reasons, the Home Rule Book Shop at 10, Esplanade, could not be so well equipped as Mr. Arundale desired; but still a large number of books dealing with India were made available, specially the cheaper publications such as the Home Rule and New India pamphlets. The contribution which the Home Rule Book Shop made during those days and has made later on to the increased study of national literature and therefore to the better understanding of national problems has not been adequately recognised even to this day. But it is doubtful whether the Home Rule League or the national controversies of the day would have evoked anything of the enthusiasm which they did without the assistance of the Home Rule Book Shop.

Mr. Arundale's personal view of the success of the Home Rule Book Shop was conveyed to the readers of *New India* about a month after it was in working order. He said: "From the business point of view, we do a very good trade and more than meet our expenses through the discount we receive in connection with our sales. I might mention that during the last three weeks over a thousand rupees worth of Home Rule literature had been sold to the people living in Madras, and

I consider this as the most important propaganda." He added: "To me the most interesting feature is the comradeship and good will, for which the shop is daily responsible. Young men come to us in large numbers every day, and there is always an opportunity either for a little chat or for a cheery word or possibly for a little advice. The shop in fact has become a kind of club where we talk over our hopes and our work, and any one who suffers from depression and who feels that the Home Rule cause is languishing should make a point to come round to 10, Esplanade, where he will see faces that are reverse of lugubrious. For my own part, I can truly say that I am daily cheered by my visit and I am most thankful that circumstances have allowed us to establish so useful a Home Rule institution." Mr. Arundale has not lost his interest in it even after its transfer to the Sons of India, Ltd., and he loses no opportunity to put in a good word on its behalf or give any piece of advice to the present management which, it is needless to add, is most respectfully attended to.

The daily notes by the Organising Secretary on the Home Rule page served a very useful purpose, and very often Home Rule Leagues all over the country had their inspiration from the suggestions stated therein. The following two paragraphs from the issue of November 10, 1916, may be quoted as a typical instance:

"I hope every branch of the Home Rule League has enthusiastically seized the opportunity

afforded by Sir Benjamin Robertson's sudden access of fright. Every branch of the League ought to send a strongly worded resolution to the Viceroy, to Sir Benjamin, to the Secretary of State in Council, Know-Nothing Chamberlain, and Mrs. Besant. You all remember the words 'Agitate, agitate, agitate.' We believe in agitation and trust to it. Unless we keep going all the time tirelessly and ceaselessly, agitation will be of no use. Mrs. Besant is India's friend, and it is proverbial that Indians always stand by their friends, specially where these are servants of the Motherland. Branches have to repeat and repeat 'we will not have this.' There is no 'out of season' for this remark. It is always 'in season', and at every public gathering the voice of protest must be raised. I advise also writing or speaking to your local official. He may say it is not his business. But he is part of the bureaucracy, and this exclusion order is emphatically the bureaucracy's business. Anyhow he will report on the feelings of your locality and thus will affect the actions of every possible Sir Benjamin. The time must be clearly shown to have passed away that the Indian people can be treated as if they were of no account, as if the bureaucracy were nurses and the Indian people children. India is old enough when it is a question of contributing men and money to the war; then she shows this, that or the other quality including of course the inevitable gratitude for bureaucratic benignity. But when she wants to

manage her own internal affairs but not merely to take part in the management of affairs imperial, she is told that the nurse knows best what is good for her. We are much more useful to our Emperor upstanding than lying down. So stand up, claim what is your due for the sake of India and *Ad majore Imperii Gloriam*."

Mr. Arundale's notes were not always quite pleasant. Sometimes he would offer as a piece of advice a bitter pill clothed no doubt in sugar-coating. He wrote for instance on November 15: "I have often wondered in these columns why so many people want to know what they are to do to help the Home Rule work. My experience is that the person who wants to know what to do is one who, as a general rule, does not want to do anything but feels he ought to want and looks about for somebody to do for him the thinking. He is too lazy for himself to do. . . . . . To put the principle into a sentence, let me commend to you the six S's—study something, support something and start something."

CHAPTER VII

At the Lucknow Congress.

The first activities of the Home Rule Leaguers were directed naturally towards the winning of the National Congress to their side. They had scored a notable success during the previous year. But it was felt everywhere that at the Lucknow Session they would have to work harder if the results were to be fully satisfactory, and their efforts were successful happily from almost the early days. The Joint Session of the All-India Congress Committee and the Muslim League met in November under the influence of the repressive policy of Lord Chelmsford, and there was little difficulty in arriving at a settlement satisfactory to all. Only a few minor issues were left outstanding. On the main points in what was later on known as the Congress-League Scheme, they were united. Success at this Conference and the critical political situation in the country influenced a large number of thoughtful Indians in every Province to muster strong at Lucknow and they came determined to fight out the case in spite of all opposition. There were rumours that Mrs. Besant would be interned prior to her departure to U. P., and it was feared that Lok. Tilak too might be "externed." The spread of this rumour naturally acted as another incentive with the result that days prior to

the opening of the Session hundreds of delegates had begun to gather at Lucknow.

Activities in Home Rule circles during the Congress Week were most thrilling. It was clear long before the Congress met that the Home Rulers were in a decided majority, and the only fear was that they might not exert the full strength which a majority is capable of. Home Rulers in every Province tried their best to secure a substantial majority in the Subjects' Committee and their efforts were singularly triumphant. In some of the meetings to elect the Subjects' Committee, the nomination of a person had only to be followed by the intimation that he was not a Home Ruler to be rejected by a large majority. The only qualification which the Subjects' Committee demanded almost in every Province was whether he was a member of the Home Rule League and was pledged to support the Home Rule leaders in that Committee, and any one who did not satisfy the qualification was brushed aside in spite of all past achievements.

Happily for the national movement, two events happened during the Congress week which lent further influence to the Home Rule cause. A letter written by Mr. Curtis under semi-official auspices and printed in the Government Press, Allahabad, fell into the hands of Mahathma Gandhi and was at once published. The letter gave full details of a plot, secretly arranged, by which India was to become a dependent of all the Self-Governing Colonies at the end of the war, and the

publication of these details created a most electric situation. Even those who were opposed to the Home Rule Movement thought that our enemies were so rapidly organising themselves that it was essential to present a united front and to put forward a more drastic scheme of reforms than they themselves desired. Another event of an equally auspicious character was a speech by His Excellency Lord Chelmsford at Lahore, in which he stated emphatically that he would be acting dishonestly if he said that the rate of progress in India would be rapid in the near future. A frank statement of that type was bound to evoke considerable discontent at any time in India, and when it came during the Congress Session and soon after the publication of the Curtis letter, the feeling in the Congress camp was roused to the highest possible pitch.

The decisions of the Subjects' Committee under those circumstances were almost a foregone conclusion, and one of the very first was that, in future, examinations for entering the Public Services must be held in India. Till then, the Congress was demanding simultaneous examinations in England and in this country. The Home Rule Subjects' Committee felt that it would not be in keeping with our demand for Home Rule if we laid down that we might have officers examined in England and not in India. This resolution was passed by the Subjects' Committee almost unanimously, thus showing the temper of the Committee at that moment. A somewhat grave situation was

however caused later on by the reluctance of the elder leaders to hasten the consideration of the Self-Government resolution, but when it was found that the Home Rulers were prepared to brush aside any personality if it blocked their way, wiser counsels prevailed, and after a few minor discussions, the following resolution was passed. Mr. Surendranath Bannerji was to propose it and Mrs. Besant to second it, and among the supporters were such well-known Home Rulers as Lok. Tilak, Mr. Baptista, and Mr. Pal. The resolution itself ran thus :

(a) That having regard to the fact that the great communities of India are the inheritors of ancient civilisations and have shown great capacity for Government and administration, and to the progress in education and public spirit made by them during a century of British Rule, and, further, having regard to the fact that the present system of Government does not satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people and has become unsuited to the existing conditions and requirements, the Congress is of opinion that the time has come when His Majesty the King-Emperor should issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of the British policy to confer Self-Government on India at an early date.

(b) That this Congress demands that a definite step shold be taken towards Self-Government by granting the reforms contained in the scheme prepared by the All-India Congress Committee in concert with the reform committee appointed by the All-India Muslim League.

(c) That in the reconstruction of the Empire, India shall be lifted from the position of a Dependency to

that of an equal partner in the Empire with the Self-Governing dominions.

A more notable triumph was the succeeding resolution which gave the Home Rule Leagues authority to push forward the Congress propaganda as a Congress body. The following is the text of the resolution :

This Congress urges on the Congress Committees, the Home Rule Leagues and other Associations which have as their object the attainment of Self-Government within the Empire the necessity to carry on throughout the year an educative propaganda on law-abiding and constitutional lines in support of the reform proposals put forward by the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule League.

The acceptance of this resolution was very unpleasant to non-Home-Rulers who, for mysterious reasons, were looking with great suspicion on the Home Rule movement, and one of these, a prominent Poona gentleman, seems to have remarked in the Subjects' Committee that he did not know the very existence of the Home Rule Leagues, and that it would not be proper for the National Congress to give its support to so obscure an organisation. But counsels of that type were brushed aside one after another. And in the open Congress, all references to the Home Rule Leagues and the Home Rule Leaders evoked the greatest possible enthusiasm, and it was evident to every one that the minority against the Home Rulers was far smaller in the open Congress than even in the Subjects' Committee.

CHAPTER VIII

The Home Rule Conference

Early in the month of December, it had been decided to hold a Home Rule Conference at Lucknow to discuss problems of general importance to the Home Rule Movement. The date of the meeting was eventually decided on Saturday, the 30th of December, at the Pandal of the Theosophical Convention. Though the appointed time was 7 o'clock in the evening, a large gathering was observable even before sunset, and it consisted of not merely members of the Home Rule Leagues. Consequently, it was decided that it would be best not to discuss any business propositions. Leaders of both the Home Rule Leagues were present, prominent among those being Mrs. Besant, Lok. Tilak, Messers Khaparde, Pal, Arundale, Telang, Belvi and Karandikar and several others. Mrs. Besant herself opened the proceedings with a short summary of the struggle in the Congress and explained at some length the various features of the scheme of reforms passed by it. In conclusion, she observed : " The present scheme is but transitional to be worked upon during the years of the reconstruction of the Empire. Out of the present scheme will grow the real Self-Government. India will in her full growth have a voice in the Empire's concerns, a voice not less potent than that of the Self-Governing Colonies. Yesterday was

consecrated to this work by the Congress. Never before had India's voice spoken more vigorously and more bravely than in the memorable session in this historic town. There are now no differences between us. We are one nation. It is necessary that we must see the scheme carried out. The present intolerable condition must be put an end to."

Lokamanya Tilak next addressed the gathering. Speaking of the work so far done and the work before the country, he observed that in the Lucknow session of the Congress two important changes have taken place in our public life, and proceeded :

Hindus and Muslims have been brought together. There is a feeling among the Hindus that too much has been given. I think the objection is not rational. As a Hindu, I have certainly no objections to making this concession. When a case is difficult, the client goes to his Vakil and promises to pay one half of the property to him if he wins the case. The same is the thing here. We cannot rise from our present intolerable condition without the aid of Muslims. So in order to gain the desired end, there is no objection to giving a percentage, a greater percentage, to the Muslims. Their responsibility becomes greater, the greater the percentage of representation you give to them. They will be doubly bound to work for you and with you, with a zeal and enthusiasm greater than ever. The fight at present is a triangular fight. You have to wrest the whole Self-Government from out of the hands of a powerful bureaucracy. This body has already commenced to work in order to

retain its power in its own hands. It is but natural. You would do the same thing yourself if you were in power. Possession is nine points of law. Bureaucracy is in possession of power and why should they part with it? Rights cannot be obtained by yearly resolutions. There are difficulties in the way of carrying out these resolutions, but these difficulties must strengthen us in our beliefs and in our actions.

Bureaucracy too has done some good in our country. They have tried to clear India of the jungle that was there. But further on, after clearing the jungle, there is one thing to do. They do not want to sow in the ground thus cleared. We want to utilise it for agriculture. India has united into one mass under this bureaucracy, now it is expected to rise to the call of duty. The next point naturally arises. We now want liberty. Similarly, we educate our children and expect them to take our position later on in life. So is the case with Englishmen. They have united us, they have educated us and they must expect us to take the position we are fit for. History and reason are against the difficulties created by the bureaucracy and we must triumph in the end. The only thing that comes in our way is that we are not yet prepared. No shilly-shallying will do. Be prepared to say that you are a Home Ruler. Say that you must have it, and I dare say when you are ready, you will get it. There is nothing anarchical in this demand. Are you prepared to work for it? (Cries of Yes.)

Home Rule is an extensive subject. A strong resolution has been passed by the Congress and now the education of the masses lies in your hands. Home Rule is the synthesis of all Congress resolutions. Home Rule is the only remedy. Insist on your rights. India

is your own house. Is it not? (Cries of Yes). Then why not manage it yourself? (Cheers). Our domestic affairs must be in our own hands. We do not want separation from England.

There is a saying in our Vedanta meaning that if a man tries, he can become God himself. If that is so, do you mean to say that you cannot become bureaucrats if you want to? It is very obvious. Have firm faith in the brighter prospects of humanity or, as they are called, in the laws of evolution. Then, I believe by that faith, you will be able to realise your object within a year or two. (Cheers).

Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, who had only a few days ago arrived from England where he was acting as Joint Treasurer of the British Branch of the Home Rule League, then gave a short account of the work done in England during the previous six months. He said:

"At the end of May when I landed in England, I found many Englishmen and women prepared for work for the sake of India and on June 7th was formed the Home Rule League. The first meeting was held at the house of Lady Emily Lutyens, daughter of Lord Lytton, the former Viceroy of India. A leaflet was circulated and we got a very fine advertisement. The *Times* attacked it as a mischievous movement, and this gave the widest circulation possible to our work. We have now a set of officers for our Home Rule League; one a Member of Parliament and one an ex-member of Parliament are on our Executive. Five lectures were given in London, two were drawing room meetings, two public meetings and one to Women's International League. I have travelled in England and Scotland and

lectured at various places. The Home Rule League organised special meetings with Trade Unions.

I have a message to give you from the English democracy. There has been the warmest enthusiasm over what India has done in the war. They regret their past blunders as much as we do. But we must show by our work that there is a vital movement in India asking for Home Rule. When you show by your work that you are ready, the press in England will be found ready to take up your cause. That is the message of hope and trust that I am asked to give you by the Democracy in England."

Mr. Arundale, the Organising Secretary, gave a history of the starting and growth of the League. He said that it had 108 branches with over five thousand members on the roll. 150,000 pamphlets have been circulated. He gave also some details of the propaganda work done in Madras, in Bombay and in Karachi.

The last speaker was Mr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer who urged the audience to try their best to bridge the gulf which existed between the various classes, specially in the Madras Presidency where the anti-national movement had just made its appearance. Thus concluded the first Home Rule Conference, held, let us not forget, within six months of the organisation of the League.

CHAPTER IX

The alarm in Official and Anglo-Indian Circles

At the beginning of the previous year, the Congress organisations all over the country were unusually active in the early months. Committees for propaganda purposes were established in Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces, and in other places too the existing organisations took up educative work. Series of lectures explaining the various features of the Congress-League Scheme began to increase in number all over the country even in the smaller towns and villages. Prominent Home Rulers like Lok. Tilak and Mrs. Besant went on long propaganda tours.

These activities in India alarmed the bureaucracy here and the reactionaries in England. Persons Like Lord Sydenham began the anti-Indian Campaign in the British Press, specially in periodicals like the *Nineteenth Century*. They attempted to show to the British people that there was considerable danger in the political situation in India, and grossly exaggerated the demands put forward by the 19 members of the Supreme Legislative Council on Post-War-Reforms as well as the main aims of the Congress-League Scheme. Their efforts were copied in India by the Anglo-Indian papers whose venomous attacks began to increase. All these had left the Home Rule movement almost severely to itself in the fond hope that it would not gather so much

influence as it actually did. But when they found the Congres demanding Home Rule, they thought some action was necessary.

Domestic affairs in India also lent considerable interest to the political situation. While the Congress was in sessions, the announcement was made of the decision of the Imperial Government to hold a conference of the representatives of all parts of the Dominions on which India was also to be represented. The selection of these representatives created considerable amount of uneasiness first, because it was feared that they would be merely the assistants of. the Secretary of State, Mr. Chamberlain, and secondly, because there was not much faith in the attitude of these three delegates. Sir James Meston was connected with Lionel Curtis in the Round Table effort to bring India under the control of the Self-Governing Empire. Sir S. P. Sinha had only the previous year expressed his view that India would have to wait for years together before she became fit for Home Rule. Maharaja of Bikanir being a ruling prince was not expected to take any considerable interest in the affairs of British India, and it was thought that this appointment was due to the desire of the Imperial Government to represent the Indian States at the Conference. It was known that the Imperial Conference would have to decide on various controversial matters such as Imperial Preference, the status of the Indians in the Colonies and the exploitation of parts of the Empire to make it

self-dependent for all its raw-materials. India was vitally interested in all these problems and any unfavourable handling of these problems by the three delegates might affect the future of India for decades to come.

Another circumstance which added to the critical nature of the political situation was the publication of the Public Service Commission Report. It was known that the recommendations of the majority were more or less antiquated as they were bound to be, because they related to a time which has really little in common with the days in which we are now living. The alarm in the country was increased when it was found that Mr. Chaubal and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald have signed the majority report, and the Secretary of State proposed to take action on the strength of the recommendations contained therein. Meetings protesting against the tone of the whole report were held all over the country in quick succession, thus adding very considerably to the excitement of the day. Public alarm was further enhanced when Mr. C. F. Andrews announced all on a sudden that there was a proposal from the Fiji Government to continue the system of indentured labour for some time more. The people of India had been convinced that that scandalous system had been completely abolished, and the effect of the announcement was startling. People felt that the honour of India was at stake, and whatever might happen, the demand of the Fiji Government must be refused. Anti-Indenture

leagues cropped up almost in every city and town, and public meetings were held everywhere until the Government of India were forced to fall in with the popular demand.

Finally, the decision of the Government of India to raise the Indian Defence Force contributed to make the political situation decidedly critical. No sooner was the announcement made than prominent Home Rulers took to recruiting work so enthusiastically that every one expected the rising of a huge army of several thousands, if not lakhs. Lok. Tilak working in Maharashtra announced that, if the response to the official demand was not adequate, he would give up working for the Motherland. So strong a feeling on the part of the Home Rulers seems to have alarmed the officials and the Anglo-Indians. For days to come, the promised regulations were not published, and when they were, the conditions laid down were not quite popular. It was further decided to raise only 6000 recruits, which considerably damned public enthusiasm. There is hardly any doubt as to the attitude of the official mind towards these activities of the Home Rulers. A Poona Principal blurted out that, if these Home Rulers had no unworthy intentions at their back, they would not have worked so hard for the success of the Defence Force.

In all these ways, a situation was created in the country which very seriously alarmed the Government of India. Day by day, the number of Home Rulers and the intensity of their activities

were increasing, and the determination of the people to have political autonomy was becoming more evident. The Government of India as well as the Local Government seem to have felt that the agitation would grow into very serious proportions if they did not take immediate action to put it down. The thought did not seem to have suggested to them that it was wiser to guide the political activity along proper lines at least by announcing that Self-Government was the aim of the British Rule in India. That would have been a far happier attitude from all standpoints. But ill-advised as they were, they thought they could by a severe policy of repression put down the Home Rule agitation, and with that confidence, they issued a notorious circular to all local Governments to do all in their power to discourage the Home Rule movement. Few had, however, suspected that the Government of India would adopt such an attitude, although it was known that they were not in favour of the Congress-League Scheme. What most people had anticipated was that they would announce certain reforms which might not go as far as those demanded by the Congress, but might create a favourable impression among what are called the Moderates. It was known that the official scheme of reforms was then being scrutinised by the Secretary of State, and people all over the country were anticipating its publications at any time. The bureaucracy seemed to have, however, thought that it was necessary to put down the Home Rule agitation

before such a scheme of reforms was published. The popular view of their decision was that when the reforms were announced, they did not desire to have in the country a set of people who might prejudice seriously the chances of its acceptance by the people in general. Whether that be the correct interpretation or not, the Government of India decided to discourage the Home Rule agitation with very severe measures, and the Local Governments were recommended to take the necessary action.

CHAPTER X.

Repression in Full Swing

The public received the first definite indication that the bureaucracy had decided on repression in the orders of the Government of the Punjab and of Delhi excluding Lok. Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal from these provinces. Neither of these two patriots had any intention of visiting those provinces at the time, and yet, for no reasons whatever, the Government issued orders prohibiting their entry. No explanation whatever was given in justification of the same, and the Government maintained a discreet silence even when the question was raised in the budget speeches in the Supreme Council. The bureaucracy would not, however, stop there. Circulars seemed to have been issued to even the District Officials, asking them to discourge the Home Rule movement, and the pin-pricks in every locality increased to a remarkable extent in the course of a few weeks. The most noble instance of the same is furnished by the trouble given to the Indra-Prastha Girls' School at Delhi. Because its Superintendent happened to be a prominent Home Ruler in that small province, the Commissioner demanded from the Executive Committee of the School that she should cease to have any connection with the institution. Whent he demand was, however, ignored, the Government at once stopped the grant, on which the school had been depending for years past for proper maintenance. The bureaucrats

concerned must have fondly hoped that the school would collapse and the Home Rulers would thus be taught a lesson. As usual, they ignored the intensity and the vigour of the new spirit in India. The Indraprastha School has been flourishing since that date all the more honourably and usefully. The trouble given to them indicates the extent to which some of the minor bureaucrats were bent in putting down the Home Rule agitation.

Another blow was struck, a few days later, in the first week of May, in the shape of a circular prohibiting the presence of students at political meetings. The circular was far more drastic than that issued 10 years ago by Sir Herbert Risley. By that order, the Government of Madras ordered that "no undergraduate student in any college and no pupil in any school shall be permitted to take part in public political discussion, to attend political meetings or to join in any political association or to take part in any movement with which it is, in the opinion of educational authorities, undesirable, that persons still in *statu pupillari* shall be associated." They further asked the educational authorities that they must take into consideration not only the purpose of a meeting but the speakers who would address it. Similar restrictive orders were promulgated in the other provinces also, and it later on transpired that Provincial Governments took that action as directed by the Government of India, and in Bombay the prohibition extended even to the graduates attending the law college. But in

the other provinces, the local Governments were far less ill-liberal. When thus young India was excited more than ever, one by one the provincial administrators announced their desire to repress the Home Rule movement. We give below some passages from the speech delivered by His Excellency Lord Pentland in closing the session of the Legislative Council in Ooty, on May 24th, as a typical instance :

You are all aware that, since the beginning of the War, an active agitation has been initiated throughout India having for its purpose the advocacy of the grant to India of Responsible Self-Government at the close of the War, which, it is assumed, means at a very early date. Self-Government is the salt and strength of the British Empire. It stands or falls on Self-Government and you know well how it is standing now for justice and freedom all the world over, and that all parts of it will at all times welcome any signs of growth in the willingness and capacity of Indians to undertake, in an increasing measure, a share in the administration of India. It has been said that prosperity makes friends, and adversity tries them, and it is some compensation for the common sufferings and anxieties of the past three years that they already seem to have increased mutual good will and understanding between all parts of the British Empire. Those of us, who have the opportunity and privilege of acquainting with the conditions of Indian life and feeling, rejoice, as I do hearily, to be able to testify to an awakening sense of responsibility, and a gradual but steadily increasing fitness of Indians to take part in the administration of Indian affairs. Such reforms, however, represent only a small and minor

portion of the demands now put forward, and do not satisfy even for the immediate future those, who are responsible for the advocacy of the early grant of the responsible Self-Government for India. It is not in the province of this Council, nor is it my intention to discuss the published proposals of the leaders of this movement. These proposals will, no doubt, receive the careful consideration of those to whom they were addressed. Now, however honest his intentions may be, the candid friend is never popular, but as a sincere friend to these aspirations, I shall venture to be candid. Let us endeavour honestly and candidly to measure the situation, if, as stated far and wide, Home Rule.means nothing less than, at a very early date, the placing of the Executive Government in all its departments under the direct and full control of Legislative Councils, containing a large majority of elected members. I feel sure that I carry you with me when I say that, among Indians acquainted with public affairs, nobody, having any true sense of responsibility, considers it, or will declare it, within the range of practical politics. Yet it is this which the present political propaganda seeks to prepare the educated classes in India to expect. On the other hand, progress is to be steadily rapid, as the Viceroy said the other day, that is to say, an ideal to be attained by slow and orderly change. Then consciously or unconsciously, all of us, who have the honour of taking any part in the Government of India, are working for and accelerating the approach towards that ideal, however distant it may be. Here and now, it is impossible for us to foresee that reforms in these respects will be proposed for India at the close of the War. Whatever they may be, they will fall far short of the proposals, to which I have alluded. Yet there is no

sign of any relaxation of this agitation, and the educated classes in India are being led to expect that which will not come, and in some cases that which they know will not come. It is obvious that this situation contains the elements of misunderstanding, of difficulty and possibly of friction. The present concern of the Madras Government is not with the final solution of this problem, but with the possible reaction upon public opinion in this Presidency of the situation, which I have tried to describe. To ignore facts is to deceive ourselves. To ignore warnings from such sources is to court disappointment and humiliation. Feelings, among ill-informed and irresponsible people, however sincere and well intentioned, may provoke serious difficulties. For any such difficulties, the leaders of this agitation and all who support and sympathise with them will be directly responsible. Against all advice and warning, they have chosen to initiate and persist in this agitation at a most unsuitable time. One-sided discussion is always possible. Fruitful discussion is quite another matter, and in the full sense, manifestly impossible at the present time. Throughout the whole British Empire, the utmost efforts and the best brains are focussed upon the immediate tasks of the War, and it is futile to expect men in high office or leaders of public opinion anywhere to concentrate their attention at such a time upon the subject of Indian Government. The result is that the discussion is wholly one-sided, not subjected to even friendly criticism, misleading as to the real condition of opinion and thus inevitably unfruitful and unsafe as a guide to action. That this is largely recognised among the educated classes in India, I am of course well aware. I can well believe that many of them recognise that a movement, conducted on such lines and by such

methods, is an untimely and ill-judged departure, far more likely to shake the confidence of their friends on the fitness of Indians for Self-Government than to further the development of that Self-Government in any sphere. Unfortunately, too, and in this lies the greatest danger, this agitation has employed, and con-nues to employ, as the most obvious, if not the main, instrument of its purpose, the publication and wides-pread dissemination of unbalanced and intemperate criticism persistently directed against those who are responsible for the present Government of this country. Honest and well intentioned criticism is never unwel-come, and I am aware that these critics have declared themselves to be the opponents of revolutionary methods of agitation, and that they advocate their views on the ground of their loyalty to the person of the King-Emperor, and to the British Monarchy as an essential link of the Empire. But it is quite impossible to accept these pleas as justifying this campaign of constant detraction and condemnation, directed against the actions and motives of officials in the service of the Government in all its departments. That any such justification should be suggested indicates a complete absence of practical sagacity and political instinct on the part of those who are responsible for it. Whatever changes the future may bring, let me ask you as men of affairs to face the present situation in the interests of progress, as well as of order. All thoughts of the early grant of responsible Self-Government should be put entirely out of mind, and all violence of language should be condemned. I would appeal to all men of leading and of influence, whether personal or here-ditary, to dissociate themselves in these ways from this unfortunate agitation as it is at present being conducted.

In the meantime, the Madras Government is directly responsible for the good Government of this Presidency. This reckless campaign of calumny, directed against it, can have no other result but to lower the authority of all Government officials and servants with all classes and especially among those large masses of people, who are unthinking and inexperienced in public affairs. It is fraught with real danger not only to good Government, but to the law-abiding spirit and the good will among all classes, which at present exists in this Presidency, and upon which all good Government, must ultimately rest, and, on behalf of my Government, I call upon all who hear me, or read these words, for their support in any action which the Government may be forced to take to discourage these unwise and dangerous methods, and the extravagant aims which they are designed to further.

This speech created considerable resentment in the country, and the Nationalist papers in the provinces demanded an explanation from the Government of India as to why a provincial Governor should have been permitted to declare war so openly on the Home Rule movement.

As days passed on, it became abundantly clear that the Government were determined to embark on an unprecedentedly severe repressive policy, and arrangements were naturally made to inform the Government that, if they should carry out their decision, the country would resent it to the best of its power. In a few days, the public also realised that the bureaucracy had declared war not on the Home Rule movement but on the aims of the Congress itself, and that conviction influenced a large number

of prominent leaders like the Hon. Mr. Jinnah to join the Home Rule League at once to add to its strength. It was felt that, if this blow on the most influential as well as most vigorous national workers should succeed, the ambition of the Congress would be frustrated for years to come. Meetings were also held in several parts of the country protesting against the policy of the Government, and representations were made to the highest officials in the land warning them against the dangers of their policy.In Madras, several of the leaders came out with an open declaration stating that they would resist the repressive policy and stand by the Home Rule League under any dangers. The lead to such a declaration was given by Sir Subramania Iyer, Hon. President of the Home Rule League, in the following statement:

TO MY COUNTRYMEN

We have all read the speech of H. E. The Governor of Madras to his Legislative Council, in which he foreshadows measures for the suppression of the Home Rule propaganda, and asks for the support, in the measures taken, of all who have personal or hereditary influence. I answer that appeal, being a responsible public man, having held high Judicial office in the State, having been recognised and rewarded by the Crown and honoured by my University, and being an old man of trained caution in coming to a decision, and mature judgment. I therefore think it is my duty to the Government to state my position.

Before I was raised to the Bench, I was a Congressman and to me Self-Government or Home Rule, is no

new thing. I believe, and have long believed, that its early establishment is vital for the welfare of the country and the stability of the Empire, and that it is therefore necessary to carry on a constitutional and educative agitation for it as ordered by the Congress at its last Session. Believing thus, I gladly accepted the Hon. Presidentship of the Home Rule for India League, Honourary only because my health forbids active and strenuous work. I cannot retrace my steps; I will not resign my office, even if the League be declared unlawful. I am ready to face any penalties which may follow on my decision, for I believe that the time has come when God, in whose hands are all earthly Governments, calls on India to assert that right to Freedom which He has given, and to claim Self-Rule—in the words of the Congress—in the Reconstruction of the Empire after the War. To defend Home Rule is to me a religious as well as a civic duty, and this duty I will discharge. I call on you, my countrymen, to do the same.

S. SUBRAMANIAM, K.C.I.E. LL.D.
Retired Acting Chief Justice of
Madras High Court

Another notable warning came from the Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in the course of which he said:

I cannot imagine a graver disservice to the cause of the Empire than that when from His Majesty the King-Emperor downwards the highest representatives of the Empire have repeatedly proclaimed to the civilised world during the last three years, that the Empire and its allies are engaged in the colossal sacrifice of blood and treasure involved in this unparalelled War, in

the cause of freedom and righteousness, of the independent and unmolested existence of small nations as well as great; when the English Parliament and people have, as if with one voice, acclaimed the establishment of popular Government in Russia, as the greatest achievement of the War so far; when Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour applaud and endorse the sentiments of President Wilson that "the unity and peace of mankind can only rest upon democracy, upon the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Government"; when England is busy trying to establish Home Rule in Ireland; in short, when England is standing forward as the apostle of freedom, of the Government of the people, for the people, by the people; I cannot imagine of a greater dissèrvice to the cause of the Empire than to proclaim to the world that England cannot tolerate in India even a lawful and constitutional agitation for Self-Government within the Empire. It will rejoice the Prussian, who will use it, as showing a wide gulf between profession and practice, to discredit England in the estimation of the allies and the neutral Powers. It will sadden the heart of every one who is loyal to the connection between India and England, for it will create a discontent and dissatisfaction in India, the like of which has never been known before.

* * * *

As for Mrs. Annie Besant, I have had some very sharp differences with her in the past. But I cannot but admire her, and feel grateful to her, for the splendid manner in which she has been sacrificing herself at her age in the cause of Indian progress and reform. I hope she will be allowed to go on with her work. If she is exposed to suffering in that cause, thousands of Indians

who have not been able to see eye to eye with her in all things, will think it their duty to stand by her and to follow her.

There is a widespread feeling that such serious pronouncements on so important a subject have not been made by the heads of three provincial Governments without the knowledge and approval of the Government of India. But I find it difficult to believe that Lord Chelmsford and his hon. colleagues who constitute the Government of India, have sanctioned, or will sanction, a campaign against lawful constitutional agitation for reform. Be that as it may, the matter is so important that I think it my duty to publicly draw their attention to the far reaching evils involved in any attempt to repress constitutional agitation, and I do so in the earnest hope that the matter will receive the full measure of consideration which it deserves.

MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA

15th June, 1917

Undaunted by all these warnings, the Government of Madras at last decided upon taking extreme measures to intern the Home Rule leaders, and the fateful order under the Defence of India Act was signed on June 7th. A few formal preliminaries, however, were gone through. His Excellency Lord Pentland came down to Madras to try to induce Mrs. Besant to change her policy. Before, however, Mrs. Besant had an interview, the internment orders had already been passed on her two colleagues, Mr. G. S. Arundale and Mr. B.P. Wadia. Later in the evening, on the 16th of

June, the following order was served on Mrs. Besant herself:

Whereas in the opinion of the Governor in Council there are reasonable grounds for believing that Mrs. Annie Besant has acted and is about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety.

Now, therefore, the Governor in Council in exercise of the powers conferred by Rule 3 of the Defence of India (Consolidation) Rules, 1915, published in the Notification of the Government of India, dated 9th December 1915, No. 86, Legislative Department, is pleased to direct—

(*a*) that from and after the expiry of a period of seven days from the date of service of this order the said Mrs. Annie Besant shall not enter, reside or remain in the City of Madras or the district of Chingleput;

(*b*) that on or before the expiry of the said period the said Mrs. Annie Besant shall take up her residence and remain within any one of the following areas:—

(1) the Nilgiri district,
(2) the Coimbatore district,
(3) the Bellary district,
(4) the Palni Hills,
(5) the Shevaroy Hills, and
(6) the municipal town of Vizagapatam;

(*c*) that from and after the date of service of this order, the said Mrs. Annie Besant shall abstain from attending or taking any part in any meeting, from delivering any lecture, or from making any speech;

(*d*) that from and after the date of service of this order the said Mrs. Annie Besant shall not publish, or procure the publication of, any writing or speech composed by her, whether already published or not; and

(*c*) that from and after the date of service of this order the said Mrs. Annie Besant shall not receive or send any letter, telegram or other written communication which has not been examined and passed by the Magistrate of the district in which she resides or by such officer as the Magistrate may appoint in that behalf.

For the purposes of clause (*c*) of this order the Commissioner of Police, Madras, shall exercise the functions of Magistrate of the district during any period of residence in the City of Madras.

(By order of the Governor in Council)

LIONEL DAVIDSON,
Acting Chief Secretary.

Ootacamund, 7th June, 1917.

Mrs. Besant was given 7 days by which time she was to decide the place of her domicile in any of the seven districts chosen specially for the absence of any vigorous political agitation. She was also prohibited from speaking or writing from that date without the sanction of the Magistrate of the District or the Police Commissioner of Madras during the remaining days of her stay in the City.

After the internment orders were served on the three Madras leaders, there was hardly any doubt in the Congress circles as to the nature of the situation. It was widely felt that the Government were determined to root out political propaganda and discourage all ideas about the early grant of Self-Government. The first impulse naturally was to hold protest meetings all over the country and

show the resentment of the people at the official action. A huge meeting consisting very largely of delegates from all parts of the Madras Presidency was held at the Gokhale Hall. Resolutions were passed not only protesting against the internments, but also urging the people to take all possible constitutional steps to bring home to the British Nation the intensity of resentment caused in the country. That vague statement was due to the presence of a number of gentlemen who did not belong to the Home Rule camp and who were also somewhat lukewarm in their support of the Home Rule Movement. In the mufassal, however, the popular demand was far stronger. In some of the meetings, resolutions were passed demanding the recall of Lord Pentland and also requesting the people to take Swadeshi Vow, the effect of which, it was thought, might be made to be felt on the British public, and these protest meetings were held not merely in one province, but all over the country and participated in by all Congress leaders. A large number of people also came forward with open declarations that, whatever might happen, they would stand by the Home Rule League. In the Maharashtra, their number was very large, more than 1000. They addressed a letter to the Secretary of the Poona League that they had resolved "not to retrace their steps even if the demand for Home Rule as defined in the Congress Resolution of last year be declared unlawful, and that they were prepared to face any penalties this, their decision, might result in." The

protests were repeated on the 16th of every month, and the number of meetings began to increase rather than fall in number. In the Bombay Presidency, in U. P., and in Madras, a number of energetic propagandists began to visit small villages as well, speaking to the masses on the nature of the political situation. Finally, at the suggestion of a large number of Nationalists, a joint meeting of the National Congress and the Muslim League was summoned at Bombay. The question of internment was taken up in right earnest by some friends of India in the House of Commons; and Mr. Chamberlain's statements were far from convincing. He merely repeated the Anglo-Indian plea that Mrs. Besant was engaged in the calumny of the British administration and declined to reverse the internment orders, although his previous sanction had not been taken.

The Bureaucracy on its part stood most resolutely by its repressive policy, and in every possible way discouraged the protests. Meetings were prohibited in some parts, processions had to be given up, and an Anti-Home Rule meeting sprang up here and there almost without any open cause for the same. But on the whole, these activities only influenced the popular leaders to redouble their efforts, and every fresh act of repression brought more adherents to the Home Rule cause, so much so, that, in the joint session of the Congress Committee and the Muslim League which met at Bombay, the bureaucracy had very few apologists. It was believed at the time that,

before inaugurating the repressive policy, the Government had consulted some Indian leaders, chiefly in Madras, who had assured them that, although there would be protests, they would not assume serious proportions. But as time passed on, that forecast proved to be utterly false, and even those who stood aloof from the protest meetings were compelled by public opinion to join in the popular demand. The protest movement gathered further strength when the agitation extended itself for the release of the two Muslim leaders also, Messrs. Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, who had then been in internment for about two years. The inclusion of their names was due chiefly to the influence of several Muslim Home Rulers, and the acceptance of the suggestion certainly made the position of the Government still weaker. The result of this contest between the bureaucracy and the people may be said to have been fairly equal till the end of July when political workers everywhere could see a perceptible change in the situation. The protest movement grew in strength, while the response of the bureaucracy became less decisive. The report of the Mesopotamian Commission, the resignation of Mr. Austin Chamberlain, and the appointment of Mr. Montagu as the Secretary of State for India also assisted almost invisibly to the strengthening of the popular cause, and success was assured to the Home Rule movement for the time being when the joint Conference at Bombay was found to be fairly unanimous in its demands.

The Joint Conference was thoroughly representative except that there were none from the Punjab; but Congressmen from that province wired their full sympathy with the objects of the meeting. After recording their sense of profound sorrow and irreparable loss the country had sustained at the death of the G. O. M., who had passed away just a few days previously, the Conference passed the following resolution almost unanimously:

"That the Provincial Congress Committee and the Council of the All-India Muslim League be requested to consider the advisability of adopting the policy of passive resistance both as regards its principle and working in carrying on political work and to send their opinion to the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress. Such opinions when received will be circulated among the members of the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the All-India Muslim League and a joint meeting of the two bodies be held to consider the matter in the first week of October next."

A representation was also drawn up to the Viceroy and to the Secretary of State in which an appeal was made for the reversal of the reactionary policy and for the grant of the Congress-League Scheme of reforms. It was stated therein "that the reactionary policy has created a situation so fraught with anxiety to all who are interested in orderly progress and advancement of the country, that this joint session of the All-India Congress Committee and the Council of the All-India Muslim League specially convened to consider the grave

situation deems it its duty both to the Government and to the people to submit this representation." The Conference protested against the statement of the Provincial Government stating that the Post-War Reforms would fall far short of the Congress-League Scheme on the ground that the decision in that respect had yet to be arrived at by the British Nation and "the official statements were all the more regrettable on account of the obvious implication that the assurances given by responsible British statesmen from the Prime-Minister downwards were held out by them to the people of India on grounds of political expediency." The representation went on to add :

> Anything said or done which is calculated to create such an impression and thus to shake the confidence of the Indian public in the political integrity of British statesmanship is irritating to educated Indians as a class, striven as they have for nearly half a century to inculcate loyalty to the British connection in the minds of their countrymen, based on their own reasoned conviction that freedom-loving instincts and sense of honour and justice of British Democracy as represented by high-souled British statesmenship may safely be relied on by India for realising her aspirations for political freedom as a Self-Governing unit of the British Empire.

The irritation caused by the pronouncements of the provincial authorities referred to above became acute when threats of the Madras Government materialised in the internment of Mrs. Besant and her two associates, Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, under the

Defence of India Act. In the absence of any evidence placed before the country, establishing that any of the persons interned had in reality acted or was really about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety which alone would justify the executive action under the drastic provisions of that Act, the thinking and independent portion of the Indian public is naturally reluctant to accept the *ipsi dixit* of the Executive in a matter of this kind and is disposed not only to question the justice and propriety of such an extreme measure, but to characterise the step taken as arbitrary and unjustifiable and as a great political blunder calculated to produce mischievous consequences of a far-reaching character on the public life of the country.

There is a consensus of opinion among the Indians throughout the country that the internments are the result of a policy of repression inaugurated with a view to put down all agitation for constitutional reforms while the War was in progress, so that the silenced Indian public may be forced to accept such small concessions as the Government of India may be willing to make.

The authorities responsible for this policy of repression failed to estimate correctly the real strength of opinion in the country demanding a substantial step forward towards Self-Government for India within the Empire at the close of the War. They failed to realise further that India, convinced of justice of its cause and determined by all constitutional means to see it triumph, cannot thus be coerced into submission.

These being the main reasons which have created the storm of indignation throughout the country, he remedies for allaying it and restoring the

confidence of the Indian public are in the hands of the Government and should be resorted to without delay in the interests of peaceful progress.

These remedies are: (*a*) that an authoritative pronouncement be made pledging the Imperial Government in unequivocal terms to the policy of making India a Self-Governing member of British Empire, and enjoining the agents, and servants of the Crown in India to make honest and strenuous efforts to achieve the end in view at an early date; (*b*) that immediate steps be taken to sanction the scheme of reforms conjointly framed and adopted by the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League with a view to give effect to it at the close of the War; (*c*) that pursuant to the aforesaid authoritative pronouncement the proposals which the Government of India may frame shall be published for public discussion; and (*d*) complete reversal of the policy of repression inaugurated by the authorities in India and as an earnest thereof the immediate release of Mrs. Besant and Messrs. Arundale and Wadia.

This decision of the Joint Conference clearly indicated to the country that educated opinion in all the Provinces was solidly behind the Home Rule movement and many thoughtful people felt at the time that the fight was practically won for the time being.

CHAPTER XI

The Triumph

The first indication of a change in the official policy towards the Home Rule movement was given by an announcement made in the House of Commons and in India simultaneously on the 20th August. The announcement in the House of Commons was prefaced with the following remarks; "The Government of India have for sometime been urging that a statement should be made in regard to the India policy and I am glad to have the opportunity afforded by my Hon. Friend's question of meeting their wishes." The announcement itself was received with satisfaction and ran thus:

The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of Self-Governing Institutions one with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible, and that it is of the highest importance,as a preliminary to considering what these steps should be, that there should be free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority at Home and in India. His Majesty's Government

have accordingly decided with His Majesty's approval that I should accept the Viceroy's invitation to proceed to India to discuss these matters with the Viceroy and the Government of India, to consider with the Viceroy the view of local Governments and to receive with him the suggestions of representative bodies and others. I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of Indian peoples, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence could be reposed in their sense of responsibility. Ample opportunity will be afforded for public discussion of the proposals which will be submitted in due course to Parliament.

Even Anglo-India expressed a general approval of the policy, though coupled with the warning that Mr. Montagu must be guided entirely by the experienced administrators in the country. The announcement was objected to by the people of India, specialy the Home Rulers, on two points. The rate of progress, it was pointed out therein, would depend on the British Government and the Government of India who, it was stated, must be the judge of the time and measure of each advance in responsible Government. It was asked whether the feelings of the people of India were not to be one of the guiding elements in the situation,

and, secondly, it was urged that no co-operation on the part of Indians could be possible unless the interned leaders were released. The *Leader*, by no means known for its friendliness with Mrs. Besant, observed, with reference to the reforms to come, that, "whatever their nature, they will fail to produce the intended effect unless first the policy of repression be reversed. As its first intimation to the country of a change of liberal policy, Mrs. Besant and her co-adjutors should be set at liberty." The same view was of course emphasised by the Home Rule leaders all over the country. The burning question of the hour at that time was that of Passive Resistance, and opinion as to the expediency of having it in view of the above announcement was questioned by a few of the older leaders, specially in Madras. A manifesto was issued by some of them in which they observed "the first condition of the success of Mr. Montagu's mission is the release of Mrs. Besant and the persons who are interned for their political activities. The Irish precedent of giving freedom to all political prisoners including Sin Fieners as a necessary preliminary to the Convention of all parties may be followed by the Government of India without fear of loss of prestige. The necessity for this step must be pressed on the Government from all influential quarters. Individuals and associations must early make their views known to the authorities. Public meetings may even adopt resolutions in this behalf and forward them to the Secretary of of State as well as to the Government of India and

of Madras. On the side of the people, there is a corresponding obligation. They must cease to advocate the withdrawal of their representatives from honorary associations with the Government and other froms of political boycott, and also the proposal to start passive resistance in any form is to be laid aside for the time being." They further urged that, for the time being, all attention must be concentrated on how best the aspirations of the people may be made known to the authorities and who shohld be their spokesmen at the enquiry. Two days later, the Special Provincial Conference met at the Gokhale Hall with Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai as President. He himself had given his support to the manifesto against passive resistance. But the feeling at the Conference was so strong that the resolution in its favour was passed by a very large majority. It ran as follows:—"In the opinion of this Conference, it is advisible to adopt the policy of passive resistance in so far as it involves opposition to all unjust and unconstitutional orders against the carrying on of all constitutional agitation and also against the prohibition of public meetings peacefully and constitutionally conducted to protest against the unjust and unconstitutional orders of Internment and against the repressive policy of the Government." It was moved by the Hon. Mr. V. K. Ramanujachariar in a stirring speach, in which he subjected the manifesto against the Passive Resistance to searching criticism. At the Conference, the resolution was opposed by the Hon.

Mr. Srinivasa Sastri and Mr. Ramachandra Rao. But, in spite of their opposition, the resolution was passed with only half a dozen of the delegates voting against it. But Madras was the only province to give support to the Passive Resistance Movement. In Bombay, the consideration of the whole question was postponed and in other provinces there was no discussion whatever. Even in Madras, although at the Conference the Resolution received the support of most of the leaders, there were many including a few prominent Home Rulers themselves, who were not determined on the question. Their support was more or less forced by the enthusiasm of the younger of the Provincial leaders. Happily however for the country, there was no occasion to test the sincerity or the determination of the leaders of Madras. For, a few days later, the Government of India announced in the Supreme Legislative Council that they were prepared to recommend the release of Mrs. Besant on certain conditions satisfactory to both the parties. The Government of India asked for a statement by Mrs. Besant or on her behalf that she would co-operate with the Government of India in making Mr. Montagu's tour in the country quite successful. On receiving the same, they directed the Government of Madras to cancell the orders of internment. The first announcement by Sir William Vincent ran thus: "The Government of India are prepared to recommend to the Government of Madras to remove the restrictions placed on Mrs. Besant and Messrs. Wadia and Arundale

under the Defence of India Rules if the Government of India are satisfied that these persons will obstain from unconstitutional and violent methods of political agitation during the remainder of the war. In taking this course, the Government of India are actuated by the confidence that the recent announcement of His Majesty's Government and the approaching visit of Mr. Montagu to this country will have such tranquillising effects on the political situation as to ensure a calm and dispassionate consideration of the difficult problems which are to be investigated during his stay in this country. The Government of India are prepared under the same conditions to take the same course in regard to other persons on whom restrictions have been placed under these Rules merely by reason of their violent methods of political agitation." Although the announcement was made on the 5th September the order of release was signed only on the 17th September by the Government of Madras. The interpretation of release in Home Rule circles may be said to be conveyed correctly in the following sentiments of Sir S. Subramania Iyer, who presided over the meeting held the very next day in the Gokhale Hall to congratulate the interned leaders on the success of constiutional agitation. Sir. S. Subramania Iyer, in the course of his speech, said: "There is no other instance within the memory of the living generation when concerted action on absolutely constitutional lines and conducted with extreme moderation in spite of the violence as

some people thought has wrought such wonderful results. At the time we began our work in real earnest, the atmosphere looked as gloomy as it possibly could. We felt that we were in the midst of repression, the limits of which we were unable to guage, and yet within the short period of three months, the whole thing had in fact ended. What is the reason? It is the absolute justice of the British Nation. In spite of the absolutely unfounded threats, the Secretary of State and the Governor-General who at first played a different roll, saw the wisdom of the policy now adopted. If everyone stood firm and with determination, we would see the success of our constitutional struggle. There are many difficulties to face before we can obtain Home Rule for a continent like India, but great sacrifice on the part of the people will lead us to the goal."

After the release of the interned leaders, the work before the Home Rulers became considerably easier, though every one felt that their success might more or less be temporary. They could not be sure that Mr. Montagu would grant the Congress-League Scheme and their efforts in the early days were directed towards that object. At the suggestion of Mahathma Gandhi, it was resolved to obtain the consent of the masses of people for the Congress-League Scheme, and with that view, the propaganda was set on foot in the entire country and most intensely in Madras and the Maharashtra. Petitions in support of the Congress-League Scheme were also printed

in the various vernaculars, and signatures of the people obtained from all parts. The Home Rule Leagues all over the country worked hard with that object for nearly two months, and by the time Mr. Montagu came to Madras, more than 200 thousand signatures had been obtained in the southern districts alone.

The attention of the Home Rulers was directed at the time also to two other objects *i.e.* the release of the two Muslim Leaders, Messrs. Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, and the election of Mrs. Besant to the Presidenship of the Congress. After some trouble in Bengal got up mainly by a few older leaders who were hostile to her, the unanimous election of Mrs. Besant by the other provinces was ratified. In the matter of securing the release of the Muslim leaders, their efforts were, however, not successful. The Government of India maintained that they were interned not merely because of their violent methods of political agitation as in the case of Mrs. Besant. Although few Home Rulers were convinced by such arguments, the movement for the release continually weakened all over the country.

The demands of the Home Rule League in the sphere of political reforms were placed before the Viceroy and Mr. Montagu at Delhi on the 26th of November, and we give below a few extracts from the memorandum to indicate how the Home Rule Leagues have always been thoroughly loyal, to the Congress and so far as the aims are

concerned, there is no difference whatever between the Congress and the Leagues :

We, the Home Rule League for India, with over 52,000 members, represented here by Central and Provincial Officers, approach Your Excellency, and welcome you, Sir, to our shores, certain of a sympathetic hearing of our plea that Self-Government within the Empire—or, more shortly, Home Rule, control over our domestic affairs—should be granted to India by His Imperial Majesty and the British Parliament. We accept the Congress-League Scheme, as a substantial advance towards our goal, and endorse the demand of the National Congress and Muslim League that, in the Reconstruction of the Empire after the War, India shall be placed on an equality with the Self-Governing Dominions, as a free and Self-Governing Nation in the British Commonwealth.

We look to His Imperial Majesty's Government to carry out the pledge of the Premier, that :

> The leading principle is that the wishes of inhabitants must be the supreme consideration in the resettlement. In other words, the formula adopted by the Allies with regard to the disputed territories in Europe is to be applied equally in the tropical countries.

While these words were not spoken of internal Government, the principle is of universal application, and we feel sure that Great Britain will not deny to the Indian people the right which, with her Allies, she enforces everywhere else, and that she will not maintain in India a bureaucratic and irresponsible Government, which, with the help of Indian soldiers and Indian money, she and her Allies are fighting to destory everywhere else in the world. We believe that the British Government will meet our claims with sympathy, and

that the Government of India, as they have already shown, are in full accord with British feeling. We therefore ask for Self-Government, for a Government responsible to the elected representatives of the Indian Nation, both in the Provincial Councils and in the Supreme Council—the National Parliament. But as a first step, we are willing to accept a transitional stage to this goal, and this is embodied in the Congress-League Scheme, described in the Memorandum we present with this address. This Scheme provides for an irremovable Executive Council, consisting of equal numbers of nominated and elected members, the latter being Indians; for a Legislative Council of four-fifths elected members and one-fifth nominated: control over the purse is given to the Legislative Council, so that where opposition arises between the Legislature and the Executive, both sides may learn in the struggle to give and take, while the final argument, refusal of supplies, lies with the elected majority, except with regard to military charges for the defence of the country. The clauses in the Scheme conferring the power of the veto on the Executive provide an adequate check on hasty action by the Legislature. When the Reconstruction of the Empire is considered, the Congress-League demands that India shall be raised to equality with the Self-Governing Dominions, *i.e.*, and have Governments responsible to the Legislative Councils.

We do not propose to substitute an Indian oligarchy for the English Bureaucracy now existing. We aim at responsible Government and an ever-widening electorate; we separate the administrative from the legislative side of Government, and exclude the Civil Service from the Executive Councils, save in exceptional cases. We object to the system, more than to its agents.

We respectfully submit that none of the objections raised to this Scheme are valid. The lack of education of the masses is not greater than that of the British masses at the time of the Reform Bill of 1832, and is not likely to be much improved until India enjoys Home Rule. Education in England was not taken seriously in hand till after the second Great Reform Bill of 1867. The electorates cannot be made wholly satisfactory at first; Great Britain is still disputing, 85 years after the great Reform Bill, over the distribution of electoral power. It is absurd to expect in India a perfection of political system not yet attained in any western country. India will go on improving her political system when the power to do so is in her own hands. She must beat her music out for herself by degrees, as other countries are doing, and she must have the power to do this as other countries have. She does not want an English system imposed on her complete by Englisnmen; she wants an Indian system gradually worked out by herself, and only asks from Great Britain to be set free, as are the Self-Governing Dominions, to work out her own salvation, under the British Crown.

The microscopic minority of Englishmen, residing in this country temporarily as members of the Civil Service, or of the Government, or for commercial or religious purposes, are now resenting the very slight control of "an ill-informed House of Commons elected by a still more ignorant electorate," to quote the Calcutta *Statesman*. They claim that the interests of 255,000,000 Indians shall be left in the hands of 122,919 Englishmen, alien in religion, in customs, in habits, in ways of thinking, from the people of the country. Anywhere outside India such a claim would be regarded as

absurd and intolerable. The lack of education, the appalling poverty and increasing indebtedness of the agricultural population, 218·3 millions by the Census of 1911, resulting in the short life-period of 23·5 years—in England it is 40, in New Zealand 60—the high death-rate and small resisting power to disease due to lack of vitality, *i.e.*, to mal-nutrition, the decay of indigenous industries, the heavy taxation relative to income—all these shew that the "ruling oligarchy" are not particularly efficient in their rule. The inefficiency exposed by the Mesopotamian Commission in military matters would be shewn in civil matters if an impartial Commission were appointed to investigate them.

We submit, with this address, a Memorandum, containing our endorsement of the Congress-League Scheme, together with facts and figures which show the necessity for its acceptance. To this we add proposals for Local Government bodies—Village Boards (Panchayats), Taluq and District boards—with figures from the Madras Presidency as a sample, working on a system similar to that obtaining in England under the Local Government Board Act of 1871, and the subsequent cognate enactments. We consider this Scheme as vital to Home Rule, as it brings the immediate concerns of the people under popular control; it adds Village Boards to the present existing bodies, and makes them the unit of Local Government instead of the Firka, or Revenue Circle; it also substitutes election for nomination in all cases, and renders the members responsible to their electors. We believe that these changes will render the system really useful and educative.

To these proposals we append certain illustrative and well-considered documents; a proposed "Commonwealth of India Act," working out the Congress-

League Scheme in detail with a "Supplementary Judicature Act"; a "Panchayats Act," establishing Village Panchayats; a "Compulsory Elementary Education Act"; "Self Government for India," and "District Work"; these last two are by the President of the Home Rule League, and comprise a description of the whole series of elected bodies, intended as suggestive only, and not endorsed in every detail, the education test being probably impracticable though desirable. We add also the Scheme of the Madras Congress Committee, the final Scheme adopted by the Congress and Muslim League, and the Memorandum of the Nineteen.

We further desire to submit that the argument that Democracy is foreign to India cannot be alleged by any well-informed person. Maine and other historians recognise the fact that Democratic Institutions are essentially Aryan, and spread from India to Europe with the immigration of Aryan peoples; Panchayats, the "Village Republics," had been the most stable institution of India, and only vanished during the last century under the pressure of the East India Company's domination. They still exist within the castes, each case forming within itself a thorough Democracy, in which the same man may have as relations a prince and a peasant. Social rank does not depend so much on wealth and titles, as on learning and occupation. India is democratic in spirit, and in institutions left to her from the past and under her control in the present.

The variety of religions in India does not constitute a political difficulty which should be allowed to stand in the way of the reforms we demand. If this objection were to be allowed to prevail, the path of reform may remain blocked for ever. The quarrels between Hindus and Musalmans are less frequent than

they were, and do not touch the political amity now existing between the two great communities. There has been of late years increasing evidence of joint action by Hindus and Musalmans in the promotion of common causes, and it is a very pertinent fact that the reforms we urge are put forward equally by the National Congress and the All-India Muslim League after joint deliberation.

The fear that English vested interests will be endangered by Home Rule is chimerical. Britain has larger investments in countries other than India, but does not therefore claim political dominance. The unfair advantages over Indians now possessed by English traders, doctors, and educationists will, of course, disappear, but the deprivation of unfair privileges should not be an obstacle to the establishment of justice.

We consider that these various pleas are not reasons for withholding Home Rule, but are merely colourable excuses for withholding justice.

We place our demand for Home Rule, however, more on the ground of principle than on that of expediency. We resent what Mr. Gokhale called "the atmosphere of inferiority" in which the Indian lives; what Mr. Bhupendranath Basu described as "a bureaucratic administration. . . atrophying the nerves of action and, what is most serious, necessarily dwarfing in us all feeling of self-respect." We feel what Mr. Asquith lately called "intolerable degradation of a foreign yoke," and we believe that Great Britain will co-operate with us in the building up of our freedom. Her past struggles for liberty are the guarantee of her present sympathy.

We, therefore, look with confidence to Your Excellency and to you, Sir, to help us in this magnificent task

and for the sake of the Empire no less than of India to remove the dependence which cripples her, and to aid us in becoming free and strong.

We remain,

Your obedient servants,

Hon. President : S. SUBRAMANIA IYER,
President : ANNIE BESANT,
General Secretaries : C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR, and JAMNADAS DWARKADAS,
Organising Secretary : HON. MR. K. V. RANGASWAMI IYENGAR,
Treasurer : B. P. WADIA,

For the Home Rule League for India.

President : JOSEPH BAPTISTA,
Vice-President : BAL GANGADHARA TILAK, The Hon. Messrs. G. S. KHAPARDE, and BELVI,
Secretary : N. C. KELKAR,
Treasurers : Y. V. NENE and S. M. PARANJPE,

For the Indian Home Rule League.

The election of Mrs. Besant as the President of the National Congress was indeed a great event for Home Rulers, because it showed that the entire political field had been swayed by the Home Rule Leagues. No other interpretation was possible. There were of course, a few here and there who disliked her as also the Home Rule Leagues; but the vast majority of the people in the country had made up their mind to stand by it. In the open

Congress, the following resolution was passed on the subject of political reforms as a compromise between the various shades of opinion in that national assembly :

The Congress expresses grateful satisfaction for the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of Responsible Government in India.

This Congress strongly urges the necessity of that immediate enactment of a Parliamentary statute providing for the establishment of Responsible Government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time limit to be fixed in the statute itself at an early date.

This Congress is emphatically of opinion that the Congress League Scheme of reforms ought to be indtroduced by the statute as the first step in the process.

At this stage, the narrative of the achievements of the Home Rule movement in India may be conveniently stopped for the moment.

CHAPTER XII

Maharashtra Home Rule League

So far, we have dealt generally with the activities of Home Rulers, more prominently associated with the Home Rule League started by Mrs. Besant. It must not thereby be supposed that the success of the movement was due entirely to the activities of that League or that the repressive campaign was directed against only the Madras leaders. The Maharashtra Home Rule League had been doing splendid work all along, and though it confined its activities to a smaller part of the country than the Madras League, yet, in the intensity of its work or its usefulness to the country, it cannot be said to have lagged behind to any extent.

The Maharashtra League was started on the 28th of April, 1915, at a Conference specially summoned for the purpose at Belgaum. Prominent Nationalist leaders of the Maharashtra were in the hope that, if Mrs. Besant's activities to form the League at first would be successful, they too had better co-operate with them and have one single League in the country. At any rate, they do not seem to have decided upon the formation of a separate institution until the collapse of the Conference at China Baug in December, 1915, emphasised the need for separate action. The

provisional constitution was also drawn up, and Mr. Baptista, who is now well-known in this country for his work in England since the days of internment, was elected President, and Lok Tilak one of the Vice-Presidents. It was, however, some months before the public heard of any rapid expansion of the activities of this League; but much spade work seems to have been accomplished even before the Madras League was finally started in September of the same year.

The Maharashtra League wisely concentrated its efforts on propaganda among the masses. Most of the lecturing tours by its prominent leaders were confined to the rural areas, and Lok. Tilak himself addressed in the vernacular thousands of villages all over Maharashtra. This propaganda campaign extended to all parts of western India where Marathi is known, and its intensity brought on Lok. Tilak the notorious prosecution, in which he was asked to furnish security for good behaviour for one year. The failure of that prosecution in the High Court added still further to the propaganda work of the Home Rulers there, and a signal proof of its usefulness was afforded soon after Mrs. Besant was interned. Reference has already been made in these pages to the pledge taken by about thousand people in Maharashtra that, even if the Home Rule League should be declared unlawful, they would stand by it, and suffer the consequences. From no other part of the country did so large a band of patriots come forward to fight against repression;

and that shows how the Home Rule movement had got on under the auspices of the Maharashtra League. Another indication of the popularity of the Home Rule movement among the masses in Western India was given recently when Lok. Tilak went about the country collecting funds for his deputation to England. Mill-hands and villagers vied with each other in giving their support, though necessarily small, to make the deputation a success, and on the whole the assistance that he received from the masses, even from the financial standpoint, seems to have been far greater. It is perhaps in that respect that we find a notable difference in the activities of the Madras League and the Maharashtra League. The Madras League realised the necessity for working among the masses only at a very late stage, and it is doubtful whether even at the present moment they are concentrating their energy with as much effect on propaganda among the masses as the Poona League has been known to be doing in the past two years.

Needless to say, there has been no friction at all between the two Leagues. In all matters, they have co-operated with each other to the fullest possible extent. The two joined together in presenting the address to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State on Post-War reforms, showing thereby how the political aims of the two are identical by themselves and identical with those of the Congress. In Bombay, as well as in several parts of the country, the branches of the two Leagues

exist side by side almost in the same office, and whatever public function is organised, we find the two on the same platform. Some of the members of the two Leagues have also joined the other institution, creating thereby a bond of co-operation between the two, and in all important national activities and during all great emergencies, we find Sir Subramania Iyer, Mrs. Besant and Lok. Tilak working in close agreement with each other as has been often indicated by announcements in the public press.

CHAPTER XIII

Propaganda outside India

Reference has already been made to the early activities of the Home Rule for India League started in 1916 in London with a view to enlist sympathy for the Indian Home Rule Movement. The chief promoters of the London League were the friends and co-workers of Mrs. Besant, prominent Theosophists whose influence in the public life of England was appreciable. The League also received some momentum by a mischievous attack by the London *Times* which dealt with its early activities in a striking leading article, thus inviting the attention of all thoughtful and progressive leaders in England to the fact that an institution had come into existence which needed their support.

From the outest, a number of prominent Labour leaders had joined the movement. Mr. John Scurr, a popular Trade Unionist, and Mr. George Lansbury, the Editor of the Labour journal, *Herald*, and member of the House of Commons, both of them have been associated with it from its early days. Later on, it received the support of Mr. Snowden and Commander Wedgewood, both of them Members of Parliament, and, during the last few months, the League has been fortunate to obtain the sympathy of the Labour Movement as

a whole and its leader, Mr. Henderson. It was indeed a far-sighted and statesmanlike move on the part of Mrs. Besant to have secured the sympathy of the British Labour party for the Indian Home Rule movement. Having been a close observer of British politics, she saw that the future lay more or less with the Labour Party in England who were bound to gather more support to themselves as the war progressed. She felt that, if the Labour Party should stand by the Home Rule Movement, our cause was practically won, and from the outset, all her activities outside India have been directed to win the sympathy of that movement for our national aspirations. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa was the first emissary from India. He acted as the Hon. Treasurer of the League in London and addressed a large number of gatherings all over England, convincing the hearers that the grant of Home Rule to India was not only just but essential. Propaganda work of that type received another impetus when Mr. Joseph Baptista went to England soon after the internment of Mrs. Besant; ostensibly the reason for his going was the prosecution of Mrs. Besant's case in the Privy Council againt the internment. But everyone knew that he would be more useful as a propagandist among the Labour circles, and he has devoted almost his entire time to that purpose. The number of Trade Unions he addressed are numerous, and the resolutions passed therein in favour of Home Rule for India indicate how thoroughly and effectively he has been able to

discharge his mission. Mr. Baptista was later on appointed as the Congress representative at the Labour Conference, the fraternal delegate from India as the phrase goes, along with Mr. Polak who had left India at the close of last year. With the assistance of these two, the Labour Movement has definitely laid down as one of its aims that India shall be given Home Rule at an early date, and that is an event of the utmost consequence for the future of this country. For the first time, a definite political party in England has pledged itself to grant Home Rule to India, and that is a party which, as everyone knows, is bound to grow more powerful almost every day in the public life of England.

With the support of the Labour party, one is more than justified in concluding that the Home Rule movement will have the sympathy of the new Womens' party in British politics. The six million women who have been recently enfranchised belong to various political parties in England. But a majority of them are believed to be in sympathy with the Labour Party which had been working for women's suffrage most strenuously all these years Mrs. Fawcett, one of the acknowledged leaders of the women's movement in England, has stated publicly that on most questions the majority of women who have now been enfanchised will support Mr. Henderson in the new Parliament, and her co-workers have been even more distinct in their support of our national aspirations. Support from that quarter will

increase if the Home Rule movement in India is pledged to women's suffrage here also. And a movement in that direction is now making satisfactory progress.

A description of the activities in England for Home Rule for India will not be complete without a reference to the hostile movement organised by Indian exploiters and bureaucrats. The public are fully aware of the machinations of the Sydenham Gang, and though our friends are straining every nerve to counteract the effect of the poison which those Dug-Outs are injecting into the British public, yet several thoughtful Indian leaders are somewhat alarmed at the success of their endeavours. It is believed also that their influence on the War Cabinet has increased, the striking proof of which is believed to be the refusal of passport to the Home Rule deputation. But considering the trend of events in the political circles in England, there seems to be ample ground for the hope that the stars in their courses are fighting against the Sydenham Gang, though it will be criminal shortsightedness on our part to ignore the mischief they are sure to do.

Of late, the people of India have been expecting considerable support for the national movement from quarters outside England as well, mainly America. Ever since his declaration why he entered the present conflict on the side of the Allies, Home Rulers have been feeling that President Wilson will stultify himself unless he uses his influence in

the Councils of the Allies for the grant of responsible Government to India. It was that belief which influenced Sir Subramania Iyer to write that famous letter, in which he offered to obtain for the Allies 5 or even 10 millions of troops if England granted Home Rule to India. Moreover, if we closely study the various declarations of President Wilson and pick out those points on which there seems to be slight difference of opinion between him and the British statesmen, one finds that India may reasonably expect considerable support from his hands. It is also a matter of public knowledge now that he put pressure on the British Government to grant Home Rule to Ireland and Mr. Lloyd George does not seem to have resented that interference.

In this sphere of action, President Wilson's anxiety to grant the privelege of self-determination to all nationalities in the world will be made all the keener by the existence in America of a section of the press and public which is directly anti-British. To some extent it is also pro-German. But now that America is officially at war with Germany, there is no chance for any anti-German feeling to be openly expressed, and whatever resentment people of that class have got against England is directed to a searching investigation of the activities of Great Britain in regard to her own subject races. It is therefore urged constantly that the denial of Home Rule to India will be nothing short of hypocrisy on the part of the British leaders in view of their

declaration of war aims repeated during the last few months, and this criticism is so self-evident that there is no way of shirking or opposing it. If that section of the public is to be satisfied, President Wilson will have to increase his moral pressure on Great Britain to satisfy the reasonable aspirations of the people of India. It is now an open secret that Sir Subramania Iyer's letter to President Wilson was very much advertised by that school of thought in America with the result that sympathy for the Indian Home Rule Movement has been very considerably increased of late in that Republic. In fact, one wonders how England can go to the Peace Conference with its present war aims if she is to continue to deny political emancipation to India. It is believed that some of the British statesmen themselves realise that situation, and that it was as a consequence of that, to some extent at least, that the pronouncement was made in August last promising responsible Government to India.

CHAPTER XIV

The Future

The success of the Home Rule Leagues has thus been phenomenal within three years of their organisation. They have made their influence felt in every nook and corner of the country, and brought decidedly within the range of practical politics, the problem of Indian Home Rule. The National Congress and the Muslim League are now pledged to Home Rule, as also the vast bulk of the educated public. Every Home Ruler is, however, aware of the existence of a small minority, composed of two groups of people, who are straining every nerve to discourage the Leagues. First, there are our friends in the Congress and the Muslim League, who believe that they have asked for too drastic changes in the Congress-League Scheme. Outwardly they are loyal to the Congress; but, in their silent activities, they have evinced a weakness of mind which has alarmed the large majority of their countrymen. It is now believed by most that, in their representations to the Viceroy and the Secretary of Sate, they have expressed their readiness to accept reforms far less comprehensive than those asked in the Congress-League Scheme. The presence of such dangerous individuals, some of them are even styled leaders, has always been recognised and the

rumour that they have agreed to the official Scheme of reforms has not surprised many people. The Home Rule League has failed to bring them round. Most of them have refused to join the League for one reason or other, and some others, who have joined, take no serious view of their responsibilities as loyal members of the League or of the Congress.

There is another set of people in the country equally difficult to be dealt with. They are, however, openly hostile to the Home Rule League, and to that extent, public workers are warned of their aims. We find them closely banded with Anglo-India, and one will not be much out of the mark if they are to be called Anglo-Indian henchmen. Their activities always lay in magnifying the gulfs that seperate castes or races in India, and in minimising the confidence of the Nation in its own capabilities. At one time, it seemed, specially in Madras, as if they would mislead the masses into their ways of thinking. That danger is now almost over, though here and there we find indications of its lingering existence.

But, to the Home Rule Leagues, the danger is decidedly greater from its supposed friends of the former group. A few days ago, when it was observed by a Home Ruler that the Leagues have captured the Congress, one of the older gentlemen remarked that the triumph was quite the other way. The Congress has captured the Leagues. This view may sound strange, but none the less, it describes, to a large extent, the present political

situation. The Home Rule League, specially the Madras one, has now passed into the hands of persons who may be more fitly described as Congress leaders than Home Rulers. Congress leaders are shaping the policy of the League, and curiously several of the present day prominent Home Rulers are exactly the gentlemen who declined to join the League in its early days. This popular view of the present situation, however, ignores one essential consideration, *viz.*, the inevitable consequences of the absorbtion of another institution into its fold. A more correct view will be that the Home Rule League has lost some of its own vigour in the task of injecting new life into our two National institutions, the Congress and the Muslim League.

It is popularly believed that the Home Rule leaders have lost much of their influence in the country during the past few months. The cessations of active political propaganda for a time, coupled with the diminution of the agitation for the release of the Interned Muslim Leaders, is no doubt responsible for that view. There is also the suspicion in several quarters that, when the time for resolute action cames, the Home Rule Leaders may be found to waver—an opinion largely encouraged by the performances of some of the "leaders" during the stirring days of Internment. All these views will be brought to the touchstone when the official Scheme of Post-War Reforms is published. If the reforms should fall short of those demanded by the Congress-League Scheme, what

will be the policy to be adopted? Needless to say, in open discussion, every one answers: "We must stick to our original demand." But in practice will the leaders be firm? What lead will the Leagues give to the country? Of course, Mrs. Besant and Lok. Tilak are firm; but their voice is not supreme in the front ranks of our public life. Their status is due to the strength of their followers in the lower ranks; and it will certainly not surprise the public if, among the Home Rule leaders, Mrs. Besant and Lok. Tiltak should be in a minority. That is to-day the most serious menace in the political situation, and the younger Home Rulers are daily becoming more anxious about it. Happily, however, Home Rulers are now fresh with the experience gathered during the days of internment, when they learnt the first lessons in the art of following only those who promised to lead them straight to the goal. That decision on their part secured them an early and complete triumph. If that experience will encourage and influence the Home Rulers in all struggles they may have to face in the near furure, the prospects are certainly not, and will never be, gloomy.